The ſole-talke of the Soule:

OR,

A ſpirituall and heauenly Dialogue, betwixt the Soule of Man and God.

Which, for the great affinitie *it hath with other bookes of the Author* publiſhed heretofore in our natiue tongue, is now entituled

The fourth booke of the Imitation of Chriſt.

Tranſlated and corrected *by* THOMAS ROGERS.

AT LONDON

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To the Christian Reader.

Beeing much and earnestlie requested heere-vnto, I haue published in our vulgar toong another of Malleolus, *aliàs* Th. de Kempis, *or*, Kempisius *works: not that* (*I confesse*) *which of som wel weening, though not so well deeming persons was cõmended vnto mee, I meane that in the old English translatiõ, and in som Latine copies too, called* The fourth Booke of the Imitation of Christ,

which indeede is altogether De ſacramento altaris, *and ſo intituled: but the next to that in Kempiſius workes, namelie, the* Soliloquium animæ. *This I haue tearmed, for the great affinitie it hath with the bookes of Kempiſius by me heeretofore diuulged,* The fourth booke of the Imitation of Chriſt.

In the dooing whereof, I haue as little as might be varied frō the auctors words and phraſes, and no where from the ſenſe, but where himſelfe hath varied from the truth of God, and, I doubt not, wold haue redreſſed, had hee liued in theſe dayes of light, as he did in the time of moſt palpable blindnes.

And this haue I done with

the

the greater alacrity, becauſe I finde (and thou maiſt read it alſo in the Authors owne Preface) that hee not onelie doubted that he might vtter ſome things both fonde and offenſiue, but alſo wiſhed to haue ſome godly corrector of his faultes, and praied vnto almightie God gratiouſly to reueale ſuch things offenſiue, either vnto himſelfe, or vnto ſome other.

Whoſe godly praier, God hath heard, and diſcouered thoſe things for thy benefite, and teſtification beſide howe Kempiſius, the Author, howſoeuer liuing in a popiſh time, was yet in hart no Papiſt, but would like well of that which is done, as I truſt thou wilt, whoſe edifying, & ſpirituall

comforting, I haue onelie aymed at.

And reaping this comfort to thy ſoule, by the reading or hearing of this treatiſe, bee thankfull vnto thy God that giueth thee ſome taſte of the celeſtiall ioyes in this miſerable and all troubleſome world, to whoſe gratious protection, I do moſt humbly commend thee and my ſelfe.

The

The Authors *Preface.*

I Haue gathered togither into a little booke for my comforts ſake, certain deuout ſentences, the better ſo to commit them to memorie; I haue alſo diſpoſed them as into a pleaſant orchard, ſet out with all ſortes of trees, and bewtified with all varieties of goodly flowers, where-into I might now & then enter, both for to chuſe and behold at my neede ſuch matter as my hart deſires for the refreſhing of the mind grieued at any time, & ouerwhelmed with penſiuenes.

Now the more cleerelie, & readilie to finde vnder which arbor I might repoſe my ſelfe, or which floure were beſt to be culled out, I haue made the heads

heads of euery Chapter to glitter(as it were) with red titles. I haue likewiſe with variety of words, as now talking, now reaſoning, praying now, now conferring, now in mine owne, now in another mans perſon, bewreathed about the text with a ſweet, & delightſom ſtile.

Wherefore I entreat them whoſoeuerſhall reade it, firſt that they be not moued with indignation at that which the writer hath done, for it was his mind wholie to talke(with his God.)Next, that they will pardon the imperfection, and plainneſs of the ſtile, conſidering that god is more delighted with words that be ſimple & pure, than with thoſe that be artificiall. And if happely the ſenſe in any place appeer either not ſound, or not cleere

e-

enough, my desire is to haue a godly corrector of the same, telling him withall, that what fod matter so euer he shall espie, it hath escaped frō me not of purpose, but rather for that I was not heedie enough in marking what I writ.

Moreouer, forasmuch as man in that iudgment of his which is most probable, may bee deceiued; vnto thee, O God, almighty, and father of lights, doe I thine humble disciple make recourse, and this Sole talke (of mine) do present before thy diuine Maiestie, to the ende that thou maist both approue the things well saide, and disproue what is done amisse, and insinuate also either into my selfe, or some other faithfull seruant of thine, more rightly to obserue whatsoeuer things are offensiue.

My requést is also, holie Father

ther, that I thy poore ſeruant may obtaine at thy hands both time and ſpace to abide in the all plētiful paſtures of the ſcriptures, which be and ſhall be my chiefeſt comfort, vntill that day of æternitie appeare, & the ſhadow of mortalitie do decline away. And therefore withdrawe thou fro mee all vnprofitable cares, worldly deſires, hurtfull affections, and what elſe may hinder me from my deſired leiſure. For hee muſt haue a free minde and a quiet, that would meditate of hidden and heauenly matters. Wherefore that I may bee worthy to attaine my ſute, vouchſafe thou (my God) to endue and fill mee with the grace of thine heauenly ioy, that I may ſpeake to thy glory, and to ſom comfort of my owne ſoule.

The Fourth Booke of *the Imitation of* CHRIST.

CHAP. 1.

1. *A longing of the soule after God.*
2. *The incomprehensible maiesty of the Lord.*
3. *An exhortation to the loue of God.*

SOVLE.

AS for mee, it is good to drawe neere vnto God. a

O short, and O sweet saying, embracing God, and abandoning the vniuersall world! a Psal. 73. 28

What more can be said? And what more-ouer is to be desired? Woulde it not suffice if that were performed which now is spoken? And were o-

ther, yea many other things vttered, should not all in the end be reduced vnto this one thing?

Therefore, my soule, saie thou with the Prophet, *As for me, it is good* [b] *to drawe neere vnto God* [b].

[b] psl.73.28

O my God, thou art mine onelie [c] Lu.18.19 felicitie; thou alone art good [c], and sweet vnto mee.

To speake of thee it delighteth the louer; to thinke of thee, it liketh the [d] Mat.6.21 religious, whose heart is not fixed Colos.3.1 vpon the world [d], but hidden with 2 thee in the heauens, to the end that [e] Phil.4.7 both thou alone maiest bee his true peace [e], and in most ioye; and he not vexed daily in this world, where [f] 1.Iohn.2 16 false concupiscence doth prouoke vnto sin [f].

[g] Rom.8. 35.36.&c. 1.Cor.13. 4.5.&c.

O my God, how is hee affected, which is inflamed with thy loue [g]! How doth hee reioyce, that hath no pleasure in any vaine creature!

Are not these the words of such a man in that Psalme, whereout the beginning of my speech was taken, euen these his words?

[b] psl.73 25

Whom haue I in heauen but thee [b]? *and I haue desired none in the earth with thee?*

MAN.

MAN. O holie soule, ô zealous soule,

foule so longing after God! What is that I heare? What is that thou sayest? Are the things both in heauen and in earth but small things in thine eies?

SOVLE. Surely I take all things but for trifles. SOVLE.

MAN. What then seekest thou? Whom would you haue without these? And where will you finde him if not in these things? MAN.

Hath hee either name, or place, or habitation to be sought by?

Where is the place where his honor dwelleth? of which in a certaine psalm thou sangest, saying: 1 Psal. 26. 8

O Lord, I haue loued the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.

Make answere, I pray thee. For, if thou canst, showe mee him, I will goe with thee, and wee will seeke him together, yea, and he shall be thy God, and my God: and wee shall bee full happie when we haue found him, and hold him.

SOVLE. What aske you this at mine hands? Or why so curiously doe you enquire of this matter of mee? Thinke you I can, or am able to vtter such things? What though gladlie I SOVLE.

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would, conceiue not yet, that what through the rareneſſe of the thing, and the deepnes of the myſterie, I am reſtrained back?

What aske you mee? Aske them who haue both heard and ſeene, they are ſuch as better can deſcribe him whome you ſeeke.

k Pſ. 94. 8. 9 10. But rather aske him that knoweth all things [k]. For he it is, of whome we ſpeake, that both beſt can tell you who himſelfe is, yea and beſt declare the place of his owne aboade. Euen Pſal. 119. 12 he it is (and none other) which teach- l Pſal. 94. 12 eth man knowledge [l], and giueth his m Iam. 4, 6 grace alſo to the humble [m].

Make recourſe vnto him which reuealeth himſelfe when hee will, and to whome he will [n], neither is there anie beſide him that can open. Hee alone can reueale to thee what the n Mat. 11. 25 ioie is of ſuch as loue him [o], and that 1. Cor. 2, 9 far more excellentlie than I can tell you.

MAN. But why ſpeake you on this wiſe, O holie and humble Soule? Thinke not that I would know that of you, which neither ought to be knowen, nor can bee vttered. Keep your ſecret to your ſelfe; let your doore ſtill abide ſhut vppon you: let the

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the seale of faith remain vncancelled, neither let the vaile, for me, be remoued from the sanctuarie.

Eate you holie bread (by your selfe) in the chappell, go in into the tabernacle of your house, ascend into the vpper parlor, enter into the cellar of the eternall king, or, which is more noble, & soundeth more sweetlie, euen into the bride chamber of your celestiall spouse.

I know it is written [p], *It is not good to take the childrens bread, and to cast it to whelps.* I know this, I saie, and haue read it: but marke againe what followeth, and take pittie vpon me, according to the words of her that said [q], *The whelpes doe eate of the crummes, which fall from their maisters table.*

p Mat. 15. 26

q Matt. 15. 27

And therefore hide not that fro mee which I demaund, but of the greatnesse of your inward pleasures, poure-out euen a sparkle of the firie loue. Giue me one small drop of pretious wine, send forth some little sauour of the best ointment, whose chiefest parte and louelie comfort is well and vsuallie knowne to thee, that I also may taste thereof.

Why linger you? Satisfie my desire, and open the doore to a friend

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now at this third knock.

O beloued, ſpeake of the welbeloued; let not me be neglected.

If you cannot deſcribe him rightly as hee is, yet ſpeake of him ſo well as you can. For indeede as hee is, who is able to deſcribe him? Yea, who is able to conceiue the deſcriber?

Therefore, if not, as in himſelfe he is: yet tell mee what thou thinkeſt of him. If not what to himſelfe: yet vtter out howe good hee hath bin to thee.

For who euer ſhall ſearch forth what he is in himſelfe?

Thou wilt neueuer doe it, becauſe thou haſt plainly confeſſed, & not denyed, how ſpeaking of him [r],

[r] Pſ.139.6

Thy knowledge is too wonderfull for me: it is ſo high, that I cannot attaine vnto it. Whither ſhall goe from thy Spirit?

7

If then thou art not able to knowe thine owne ſpirit, which the creator and quickner [s] of all ſpirits hath made [t], how at anie time wilt thou knowe him which is vncreated? Did not this make thee all amazed to ſay [u], *O Lord who is like vnto thee?*

[s] Act. 17. 25

[t] Gen.2.7

[u] Pſa. 35. 10.

Notwithſtanding, of all friendſhip, by ſome ſimilitude deſcribe him, whoſe eſſence thou haſt not yet attained

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tained vnto: Neither is it for you to denie to showe him in part, whome you thinke can not whollie be reuealed.

S. I must needs say you are too curious, and importune vpon me. Thou searchest all my priuities, and letteſt in thine hand into the secrets of my chãber.

I sent thee vnto him, and commest thou againe vnto mee? Seeke you me, or him?

But I pray you, of what spirit art thou? Be still, I beseech thee, & trouble mee not. For whom thou seekest, he is aboue me.

M. But can hee that seeketh after God, so easilie giue ouer? Protract not to speake, for you may comfort mee forth-with. How long will you keep me in suspence? What, doe you say and vnsaie?

As I liue I will not giue ouer, except you blesse mee. For I compt it a blessing, if thou showe mee thy God.

Now therefore if thou hast seene him, tell me plainlie, and I will take him vpon my shoulders.

S. I know thou hast a great desire, and a loue vnto the creator.

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But a great thing is it which you require at mine handes, and ſuch a thing as I am in doubt whether it may be done or no.

He whom thou ſeekeſt, knoweth it right well: for it is not in mee to let thee know ſo much.

Your demaund ſeemeth vnto mee
x Sal.S.1,6. to be like that of the Spouſe which in the ſongs did ſaie x;

Show mee, O thou, whom my ſoule loueth, where thou feedeſt.

Wilt thou then learne of me who this is, or what good hee hath done with mee? Doubtleſſe it is not in me to ſhow you.

But you are not content; neither his greatnes, who exceedeth the heauens
y 1.Kin.8.27 y, can deterre you; nor my weaknes, which in his eies am nothing, make you to deſiſt.

Why haſt thou laide this burden vpon mee? I am not able to tell thee, vntill I goe into the ſanctuarie of
z Pſal.73.17 God z, and vnderſtand the ſame.

Whie are you ſo deſirous to know that, which may not be vttered?

M. And will you not? Oh, how faine would I bee inſtructed! For thoſe things wee are moſt earneſt to know, which the moſt hardlie maie bee

reuea-

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reuealed.

Notwithstanding, once againe I praie you bee not so hard, as altogether to be silent.

Thinke not that forthwith I will vtter what you shall saie, vnto our enemies. I will keepe your saying as a friend, yea, as a very friend ought to doe.

You may boldely tell mee your mind secretly. Lo, wee two be heere alone; neither I with lightnesse, nor you with arrogancie are delighted, but in him which hath giuen vs vnderstanding, euen of him will wee speake.

And if happely he come while wee are talking, let vs giue place, and let him be betweene vs. If he vouchsafe to speake, let vs heare him gladly, and be silent till hee haue done. At which time you shal not be bound to satisfie my demands. For when he speaketh, all flesh must be still.

S. This couenant I like well. Only let him bee with vs, and bee wee carried vnto our secret places. Let him be the guide of our speech, and conduct vs whither our delight is to goe.

This beloued of whome you so

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diligen. lie enquire, is for his greatnes vnſpeakeable [a], for his height and glorie incomprehenſible [b]; for his ſtrength and magnificence infinite [c]. Whatſoeuer is either ſpoken or writ. ten of him, commeth far behinde his maieſtie, becauſe in glorie he excelleth all things.

a pſal. 139. 6
b Iob. 9. 10
c Pſal. 8. 1. 2

The heauens haue ſaid, He hath ouerpaſſed, and aſcended, and preuailed ouer vs [d].

d 2. Chron. 6 verſe. 18

The earth hath aunſwered, If the heauens, and the heauens of heauens doo not comprehend him, aske me of him [e].

e pſal. 139. 7 8. &c.

The ſtarres haue ſung; Wee are darkneſſe and not light, vnleſſe hee inlighten vs [f].

f Gene. 1. 1. 2 &c.

The ſea trembled, and ſayd, Hee is not in mee, and the deepe knoweth him not [g].

g pſal. 139. 12

Heare you what they ſay?

M. I heard, and was ſore troubled; at their voice my very lips trembled.

S. What then will become of thee if wee ſhould aske him? Let vs ſpeake vnto him.

O Lord, art thou hee of whome the Prophets haue prophecied, and whoſe commandement all thinges in their ſeaſons doo obey?

Verely

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Verely I am that I am[g]; & beſides mee there is none other God[h]; I am the beginning and the ending[i]; I am the creator[k], and the gouernor[l] of all things. I liue ſaith the Lord, and I wil raigne for euer and euer.

Now I tell the worme what ſaieſt thou, being inuironed with ſuch light?

Lo, thy beloued, whome thou thoughteſt was with mee, ſpeaketh vnto thee.

Hee was with mee when I ſaid[m], *For me it is good to draw neere vnto God.* Hee will bee with thee, if thou alſo wilt ſay,[n] *My ſoule refuſeth comfort: the day of miſerie I deſire not*[o], *for thou art my king and my God*[p].

Bee not like to raging louers, but loue God alone. ſeeke him alone, which admitteth no companion of the world into his fellowſhip.

Talke thou only with him, and though he depart, leauing the roome void, beare all things patientlie. For his woont is to goe and to come, to proone his friend, and make him perfect

GOD.

[g] Ex. 3. 14
[h] Deut. 4. 35
[i] pſal. 18. 31. Iſai. 45. 21
[k] Reue. 1 8
[l] Iſai. 42. 5 Act 17. 24
[l] Heb. 1. 3
[m] Iohn 5. 17

SOVLE.

[m] pſ. 73. 28
[n] pſa. 77. 2
[o] Ier. 17. 16
[p] pſal. 5. 2

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perfect in louing.

If thou desire his presence, beare his absence patiently. Waite, and wayte agayne, hee will depart for a while, and after a while he wil againe returne.

Loue maketh thee thus affected, which now heaueth thee on high, and straight way flingeth to the ground againe.

His loue is than all flowres sweeter; than lilies fairer; & brighter than the pretious stones.

For no creature is to bee preferred
q Mat.10.37 before the loue of God q, and therefore for that euery thing is to be de-
r Mat.16.26 Luke.9.25 spised r.

So soone as I was touched inwardly with his loue, I forthwith began so to be inflamed in my minde, that bidding adieu to all things in the world, I onely wished for his most pure embracements, &, as it were bearing hot coales out of a burning Ouen, I vttered these words, which but fewe doe
fpsa.73.25 26 vse f.

Whome haue I in heauen but thee; and I haue desired none in the earth with thee. God is the strength of mine head and my portion for euer.

By these, gather now of thy beloued

ued, what manner a one and what hee is, which incomprehēſibly exceedeth all the things which are, and haue being.

And although hee can neyther by words bee vttered, nor conceiued in minde, becauſe he is infinite [t] : yet is he very louely, tractable, fellowly, and to be intreated, inſomuch as though he cannot be comprehended, yet after a ſtrange manner hee may bee loued.

[t] Iob. 23. 8. 9

For by loue hee is taken, yea by loue faſt bounden : but by deſire, hee is ſought; by prayer, knocked at; and by hope attained.

If as yet I haue not ſatisfied you, let him, whome you haue ſought, ſatisfie you, and teache you, aboue all teachers, to finde himſelfe.

CHAP.

The fourth booke

Chap. 2.

1. Of God his distinct iudgement *at the end of this world.* 2. *The cursed* state of the vngodly.

KNit mine heart *vnto thee, O Lord, that I may feare thy name* [a]

[a] psal. 86. 11

O my God, thou art much to bee loued, yea, and to bee feared much thou art [b].

[b] psa. 96. 4

Hee that loueth, let him bee glad; but hee that loueth not thee, let him quake and feare. But he which neither doth feare thee, nor loue thee, is vtterly foolish and frantike. For, *it is a fearefull thing to fal into*

[c] Heb. 10. 31

thine hands [c].

And, *who knoweth the power of thy*

[d] psal. 90. 11

wrath [d]? Or, *who may abide the day*

[e] Mala. 3. 2

of thy comming vnto iudgement [e]?

For, thy roaring shall bee like a

[f] Isai 5. 29

Lion [f]; and thy glittering sword like a consuming fire.

At the sound of thy voyce all the dwellers in the world shall bee moued; and when thou commest, all the foundations of the earth shall shake.

shake [g].

Who then but will feare? Or by what meanes can any escape thine hands [h]?

If a man will hide himselfe vpon the strong rock [i], thou wilt thunder there-vpon, and it shal rent asunder. And if he lurke in caues, or mountaines, he shall be plucked out [k], and be made to sustaine thy displeasure [l], because hee cared not for thy fauour.

Surelie there is no place which can hide man from thy presence [m].

For all things are naked and open in thine eyes [n]; thou seest the heart and the reines [o], and beholdest the most secret affections of the thought, so that no secret is hid from thine eies [p].

O how terrible wilt thou bee to sinners, and to the harts that bee hardened [q], which now doo glorie in ill dooing, and triumph in wickednes, saying, *The Lord seeth not* [r], *hee will not regard* [s].

They are so puffed vp with vaine words, as though thou wouldest neuer come: yea, they turne awaie their eies, that they may not see the ende.

g 2. Pet. 3. 7 Reuel. 6. 14

h Psal. 139. 7 8. &c.

i Isai. 2. 19 20. &c.

k Hose. 10. 8 Luk. 23 30 l Reuel. 6. 16 17 Reuel. 9. 6

m Iob. 23. 10 Psal. 139. 7 8. &c.

n Heb. 4. 13

o psal. 7. 9

p Ecclus. 23 verse 19 20

q Prou. 1. 24 25. &c.

r psal. 10. 11

s psal. 94. 7

But

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But in the houre that they thinke
t Mat. 24. 44 not, thou wilt come t, and they shall
u Luk. 21. 35 be taken in the snares u of their owne wickednesse. And as theeues and robbers beeing suddenly taken are confounded: so shall they bee put to confusion, at their due time.

Then wilt thou haue them in deri-
x Prou. 1. 26 27, 28 &c. sion x, which now deride thy seruants; and euill shall bee rendered vnto such as haue abhorred thy righteousnesse.

Now they stoppe their eares vnto thy voice; but the time shall come, when they shall crie and not bee heard.

Now they turne thy word into a fable: but themselues shall be turned
y Mat. 25, 41 then into a flame of fire y. For thy word shall goe out with an horrible blaste; and it shall strike the wicked and Vnbeleeuers without all mercie.

What will the proude person saie then, so puffed vp with knowledge, and swelling in power? What answere will hee make, when the last
z 1. Cor. 15 verse 52 trumpe shall sounde in his eares z? When thou Lord, our God, shalt ap-
a Mat. 24. 31 b 1. Thes. 4. verse. 16 peare in Maiesty, togither with thine Angels a and Archangels b?

Then

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Then all the vngodlie deriders of thy word shall bee husht; and they which haue molested thy seruants, stricken with an horrible feare [e].

[e] Wisd. 5. 2 3. &c.

Then shall they vtterly bee confounded, which laying a good conscience and honestye aside, gaue themselues to vanitie and wantonnes.

They shall suffer punishment then, which haue looſed the bridle vnto the flesh.

Then shall they roare towards heauen, which now are cunning in vaine musick and daunces:

Then shall that bee turned into mourning, which hath bin contracted by inordinate pleasure:

They shall be bound vp in bundles together to be burned then [d], which haue beene companions together at dronkennes and bellie-cheere. And whome loue hath bound in wickednes, the reuenging fire shall roule together in torments.

[d] Mat. 13. 41 42. 43

O ye fooliſh, and wretched, O ye frantike, and blinde louers of the world, what doe yee, what is your meaning? how will yee escape the vengeance of the Lord?

Why for a little pleasure which you

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you doe loue, do ye hasten vnto eter-lasting torments? Why feare ye not hell, which do so feare a little penãce? And, you which flie the death of the flesh, why aforehand doe ye not take heede of the eternall death of the soule?

Vnlesse therefore yee doe conuert, and repent, ye shall neuer escape these horrible and fierie torments of Gods displeasure.

When I consider the day and houre of the generall iudgment, my bones doe shake for feare, because entreatie then shall not turne away the wrath of God, but he will be a righteous iudge to all [e].

Act. 10.42. [e].Tim. 4.8 Hebr. 12. 23

O God most holie, mightie, and mercifull Sauiour, saue me from that bitter death, and giue me grace to repent, that I may vnfeinedly bewaile my sinnes before I depart out of this present world.

of the Imitation of Christ.

CHAP. 3.

1. An humble confession of sins;
2. *with a Prayer for grace* to repent.

My sorrowe is euer before me [a].

O my God, foule haue I spotted my life with manifold sinnes: but, Lord, beholde my teares which I shead before thee, because I haue so much offended thine holines. a Psa. 38. 17

For I know that in mee, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing [b]; & that so long as I carrie about a mortall bodie, I am not free from wickednes [c]. b Rom. 7. 18 c Wis. 9. 15

I therefore doe sinne, and offend day by daie; &, which is more lamentable, I suffer many sins to passe away without sorrow and due repentance.

For being busie most commonlie, and encombred with affaires of the world, and vaine curiousnes, I am not able so speedilie to returne vnto wholesome teares. Whereof it is that the darkenes of sinne doth encrease so

so mightilie against mee, the which both stop vp the fountaines of grace, and hinder the streames of heauenlie comfort from comming vnto me

LORD. And is that a small offence?

SOVLE. No, my God, it is a great sinne, and so much the greater, as it passeth the sooner from the heart, and doth not pricke mee with sorrowe.

But, Lord, wilt thou not regard this my wicked dealing? How long shall I delude thee, and thus deceiue my selfe!

Wilt thou alwaie be silent? where is thy rod? where is thy spur? where is thy wand?

O Lorde, why doest thou withdrawe thy iudgement, and the paines of hell from mine eies?

Were these things alwaies in my remembrance, could I bee so retchlesse?

Thy silence and patience is for mine amendment [d]: but if I still bee negligent, wilt thou not then punish mee seuerely [e]? Surely thou wilt punish mee, if not in this world, yet in the world to come.

d Wis. 11.20, 2.Pet.3.9 & e Wis.12.10

For nothing shall passe awaie vn-

reuenged, neither small, neither great offence.

But much better heere in this world, where both weeping is profitable, the paine is short, the satisfaction more accepted, and reconcilement sooner had.

And therefore spare not the rod; but with a sharpe water annointe mine eies, and reserue not my sinnes vntill the time to come; least then I bee deliuered vnto the tormenters vntill I haue paide the vtmost farthing [f].

Better it is nowe a little for my profit to bee pricked, than hereafter to feele the bitter paines of hell fire.

[f] Matt. 5. 26.

Purgatorie.

Wherefore I am to mourne, and to conceiue a great sorrowe for my sinnes.

For many things I haue to bewaile, but no cause at all to laugh.

The darkenesse of mine heart, the slipperinesse of my conscience, my proneneſſe vnto wickednes, my want of grace, doe wish mee, yea rather of necessitie doe enforce mee to weepe and to lament.

Furthermore, the remembrance of manifold temptations, and of assaults

faults to sinne, should make me haue little lust to be merrie.

Spare me, O Lord, spare me.

For though I weepe, being touched inwardlie with sorrowe, it is no maruell, because the time is nowe to weepe.

O happie is the houre, when I conceiue sorrow for my sinnes! Blessed are the teares which doe flow from the griefe of heart, at the consideration of the foulenes of a guiltie conscience.

And who is able to sound the bottom of this depth, and to reproue the hidden filthines without feeling?

g Ioh. 1. 9. O my God, the true light g, thou canst lighten all the obscure places of mine heart; yea and burne vp all the spots thereof, in the spirit of heate, & iudgement.

It is in thee to giue a newe heart, h Psa. 51. 10. to create a new spirit h, and there to prepare a secret habitation, that it may be a place for thee to rest in, and a tabernacle of thy name, which art the louer of cleanenes, & the guest of the good conscience.

But forsomuch as willinglie thou doest not visite a disordered house, but

but commonly leauest the same to be illuded with beastly affections, I am the more carefull least that betide me.

But helpe me, O mercifull & gracious God, to repaire the ruins of this mine house

Woe to him from whome thou departest away offended. But peace to him vnto whome thou descendest, and with whome thou abidest.

I miserable wretch now placed in the midst of snares, and loaden with the shackles of wickednes, what counsell is best for me, or what remedie to be vsed, but onely to lift vp mine heauie eies vnto thee, that my crie may be heard in the heauens?

For a polluted conscience shall neuer finde or haue a better medicine, than bitterlie to slaie it selfe in prayer. And how can extreame tentation more profitablie be cured that it preuaile not, than by powring continuall petitions vnto thee, and by humbling our selues?

But who can giue mee these blessings? I mean to praie and to weepe as I ought to doe. VVhere may I

attaine

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attayne that humilitie, and abound-
dance of teares? Doubtlesse of thee
k Iam. 1. 17. Lord, with whome is mercie[i], and
great redemption.

O Lord, my God, the giuer of all
1. Pſal. 130. 7 grace[k], graunt that I may, as I am
bound, bewaile mine offences, seeme
they neuer so small, and to amend all
without vaine excuses, aswell those
offences which are secret, as those
that are well knowen.

Let this mine heartie repentance
get me thy fauour again, and prepare
vnto well dooing, and to that which
tendeth vnto saluation.

CHAP.

CHAP. 4

1. A lamentation of the soule for her weakenes, and vnstaiednes in the race of virtue.

Thine eyes did see mee, when I was without forme [a].

[a] Psal.138.16

O Lord my GOD, what in the ende will become of mee, seeing daily I doo offend?

When shall I amende my life as I ought to doo? When will it bee better with mee? When shall I waxe strong? And when shall I ouercome?

I am cast head-long into the deep pit of filthinesse. Who can thinke there is yet hope left to arise againe, to amend, to goe forwarde, and to come vnto the ende? Surely touching my selfe I am out of all hope: ah that mine hope were stronger in thee!

I greatlie dooe despaire, because my weakenes encreaseth through long troubles; and I see no ende of my sorrow, and sinne.

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And though I saie, lo nowe I will begin to amend; lo it is nowe time, I will dooe my best to reforme my selfe, straight-waie, alas, sinne standeth before mee, the enemie lifteth vp himselfe against mee, and wicked custome keepeth mee backe with might and maine, contrarie to my minde.

O Lorde, behold howe I am cast downe, and troden vnderfoote: behold the troubles which I dooe endure.

Lift vp thy right hand, and deliuer mee fro my persecutors, for they are too strong for me [b].

[b] psl.142.6

My wisedome is perished, and my strength hath failed me.

Mine arme is broken, neither can my sword saue me [c].

[c] psl.44.6

I see not vnto whom I may flie; and that will receiue and heale me, I know none.

Thou alone continuest my refuge: but I dare not approch for shame, because I haue offended thee.

I haue sinned ô God, forgiue me. I am sorie, yea heartily sorie that euer I did transgresse thy lawes.

Giue mee that which seemeth right in thine eyes, and bee mercifull.

full.

Thou diddest iustlie in forsaking me, and iustlie thou diddest commit mee into the hands of mine aduersarie

But Lord, remember that which thou hast made, amende that which is decaied, for of it selfe it can neuer stande.

Marke my groaning, and my troubles: let the paine and griefe of mine heart at no time be out of thy remembrance.

O mercifull Father, cast an eye vpon my thraldome and imprisonmēt, vpon the miserie and crueltie which I doe endure; and bring mee out that am bound, from the prison house and wretched bondage.

Though a man should liue many yeares, what will hee bee the better thereby? And who knoweth whether he shall amend his wicked life, or bee worse and worse?

Man woteth not howe he shall proceede, and ende; and his continuance is verie doubtfull, because of the manifold chances of euils, & dangerous tentations.

Manie at their first conuersion from sinne, are good and humble,

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which afterwarde become frowarde and rebellious. At the firſt they were modeſt and deuoute, zealous and ſilent, and in the end prooued careleſſe, & diſſolute, babblers, and barbarous. And they which at the beginning did bridle their wicked affections, at the length had ſcarce any care at all either what they ſaid or did. And ſo by little & little wickednes taketh roote and encreaſeth while it is not preuented at the beginning.

Who therefore but ſhould feare, and be circumſpect, ſeeing ſuch vnluckie chances doe come vnto the good and modeſt?

Againe, who thoroughlie dooth knowe whether he be elected, or hath ſtrength to beare all things?

d Act. 14.22 We are all to be tried [d], and who is

e 1. Pet. 1.7 ſure that he ſhall not be burned, ſeeing tentation is a fire [e].

So that all muſt feare, and hope alike of the better: but none is raſhly to preſume, nor yet proudly to bee ſecure.

f Prou. 17.3. In deede the gold which is tried [f] ſhall be preſerued: but I aduiſe thee, O man, to conſider well of what metall thou art.

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The celestiall purger will purge, he will fine the sonnes of Leui [g], euen all that are his seruants [h],

It is not alwaies gold, which hath the colour of gold; neither is it alway stubble, or naughtie siluer, which endureth beating, and beareth the flaile. For God beholdeth the verie cogitations and the hearts [i], by them most commonly working wonders, which in the opinion of many are but cast-awaies.

O Lord God, what ioy can I haue in this world, when I thinke vpon the vncertaintie [k], and frailtie of all things vnder heauen?

Notwithstanding this am I sure of, that thou art good, & that thy mercy is from generation to generation on them that feare thee [l].

For thine infinite goodnesse and mercie, is greater than all my sinnes.

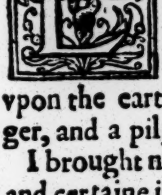
And this shall bee my comfort, while thou giuest me space to amend my life.

g Mal. 3. 3
h 2. Tim. 3 verse 12
i Psalm. 7. 9
k 2. Pet. 3. 7
Psa. 102. 25 26
l Luke. 1. 50.

The fourth booke

CHAP. 5.

1. Of the ſhortneſſe and miſerie of *this preſent life.* 2. A *prayer for* grace to renounce the world, and the vanities of the ſame.



LEt me vnderſtand the ſhortnes of my dayes. So long as I am in this worlde, I am wicked [a]: and while I continue vpon the earth, I am poore, a ſtranger, and a pilgrime [b].

a Iob. 14.4

b Heb. 11, 13

I brought nothing into the world [c], and certaine it is I can carie nothing thereout: for naked came I out of my mothers wombe [d], and naked ſhall I returne thither againe.

c 1. Tim. 6. 7.

d Iob. 1. 21,

As a ſhadow which paſſeth away, as a feather which is toſſed vp and downe with the winde: and as a gueſt of one night, ſo ſuddenly ſhall I paſſ away.

All the time wee haue heere t liue, is but as the ſhorteſt nigh

e Gen. 47. 9

Fewe and euill are my dayes [e], an after a little while they ſhall end and bee as though they had neue bee

beene.

And when man is dead, what is in man but filthines? Who will haue any care of a ſtinking carkas? Or who will enquire of the abſent being dead, whereas being aliue hee was accounted of.

A ſmall while is man remembred either of his friends, or of ſtrangers: but vndoubtedly the righteous ſhall bee had in euerlaſting remembrance [f], becauſe hee ſhall bee euerlaſtinglie linked to GOD, who is alwaies the ſame, and ſhall neuer die [g]. f Pſa. 112. 6

g Pſ. 102. 27

Therefore happie is he which putteth no truſt in man; nor yet reioyceth in any worldly thing, but hath his hart fixed in heauen [h]: for whatſoeuer is in this worlde, is tranſitory [i] and vaine. h Pſa. 2. 12

i 2. Pet. 3. 7. Pſa. 102. 25. 26

Call into thy minde thoſe which haue liued ſince the worlde began, vntill nowe, and tell, I pray thee, where they bee? And thoſe whom you ſee and heare to liue now, how long thinkeſt thou will they endure? 1. Cor. 7. 31. 1 Iohn. 2. 17

Say therefore of all, Euerie man that liueth, is but vanity [k].

O miſerable and wretched life! k Pſa. 39. 5

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O fraile, and lamentable life, which good men doe suffer rath r than desire: and wicked men, albe they desire it, yet can they not long enioie the same!

Oh, vanitie of this world, when wilt thou haue an ende? when wilt thou ceasse!

Yet the time will come, when all the elect shall bee set free from the
l Rom.8.22 bondage of corruption [l], though now
23 they doe lament, because they are estranged from the kingdom of Christ
m Psal.1.23. [m].

Would to God, the whole worlde would euen wither vp in mine heart; and my Lord GOD, euen mine immortall spouse, seeme sweete vnto my soule!

Vndoubtedly, the fleeting ioy of this present life, is but a false and a moste bitter potion. Let them drinke thereof that list, for afterward they shall feele a moste bitter flixe. And the more one hath drunke therof, the sharper shall his torments be, because the whole pleasure of this world shall more speedilie passe awaie than the
n Wisd.5.8 winde [n], and leaue to their louers
9. &c. paines and burnings [o].
o Luk.16.25 Therefore, out of my sight thou deceipt

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deceiptfull glory of the world, and all foolish pleasure of the flesh.

Manie you doo drawe, and deceiue: but in the end you leaue and destroie them [p].

Woe to them which beleeue thee; woe to them which bee there drowned.

But come, and come nigh mee, most holy humility; and the full renouncing of all worldly pompes; and neuer doe thou leaue me, ô thou sweete remembrance of my present pilgrimage.

What am I but ashes, and earth [q]? and whither tende I, but towardes earth [r]?

Oh, how wretched am I become! howe iustly may I lament, when I think vpon my pilgrimage [s], & howe little I am priuie howe I shall end the same!

If I liue well, and continue so, there is no cause whie I should feare an euill death. But who can glorie of a good life, and of a pure conscience? Hee which knoweth himselfe to be such a one, let him reioyce in the Lord [t], and take compassion vpon me a sinner.

To liue I haue no desire [u], because

p 1. Ioh. 2. 15 16, 17

q Eccles. 10 verse 9

r Gen. 3. 19

s Heb. 11. 13

t 1. cor. 1. 31

u Phil. 1. 23

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miſerie enuironeth mee on euery ſide: to die, an euill conſcience is affraide; for, to anſwere God, it hath not one
x Iob.9.3 for a thouſand [x].

The Prophet was not ſo in feare
y psa.108.1 which ſaide [y], *Mine heart is prepared, O God*, my heart is prepared.

O Lord, the God of my ſaluation, let my life come vnto a good ende; and prolong not the daies of my lamentation. With ſorrow I came into this priſon; and without griefe I ſhall not get out.

S. Long doo I thinke this life; and the rather, becauſe of the continuall miſerie and troubles which I finde therein: but in trueth it is not long, for it paſſeth awaie more ſwiftlie than
a Iob.9.25 a Poſte [a].

To a man that liueth in paine and
a Eccius.41.2 miſerie, all time is long [a], and hee counteth a daie for a yeere. This maketh my life tedious vnto mee, and ſo much the more it dooth trouble me, as the more truely I conſider all the miſeries of the ſame.

But, if happelie anie conſolation and ioie come betweene, it ſtandeth mee vpon to looke about whether they be of God, or no. If they be

of God, I accept them gladly, but yet I knowe not how long they will continue: yet howe ſhorte ſoeuer they bee, they like and pleaſe mee well.

But, would to God hee would powre them largely vppon me; and cauſe them to continue with mee a long while!

But the ioyes and pleaſures which are not of God, are vile and vading, albeit to the ſhowe they appeare ſweet and pleaſant.

Thus, euen thus paſſeth away this life, repleniſhed continuallie both with good and euill things.

Therefore ſo long as I liue in this world, I am a poore pilgrime [b]. [b] Heb. 11 13

I cannot truly ſay I haue enough, becauſe preſently there is ſatietie of no good thing [c], but the good thing which I looke for, thou art [d], in whome I beleeue: [c] Eccles. 1 8 [d] pſ. 119. 57

So that when thy glorie hath appeared, and repleniſhed mee, then, euen then I will acknowledge, that I haue enough. But in the meane while, becauſe this worde is hidden fro mee, much griefe and ſorrowe dooth inuiron my ſoule.

And therefore beeing mindfull of

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of thine holie saying, I repeate this
e Mat. 26, 38 oftentimes e, *My soule is verie heauy, euen vnto the death.*

VVell were it with me, if this houre were come, and that neither griefe nor sorrow did possesse me!

But, Lord, I beseech thee, let thy goodnes conserue me.

Chap.

of the Imitation of Christ.

Chap. 6.

1. An ardent deſire of the ſoule to *be looſed from ſin, and from the troubles* of this world,

BRing my ſoule out of priſon [a]. The greatnes of my ſorrow will not ſuffer me to be ſtill. [a] pſ. 142 7

For why doo I yet liue in this world? I knowe not what I can dooe heere.

Slowlie, God hee knoweth, I goe forward in virtue; nay woulde to God I went not backward!

O Lord, what a pleaſure ſhouldeſt thou dooe me, if ſpeedilie thou wouldeſt take mee out of this life, that a wooreſer thing come not vnto mee [b]. [b] Iob, 5. 14

My life, alas, ſigheth in paine and in wel-dooing amendeth not.

If thou looke for my conuerſion, I repent not by the ſame, but doo abuſe thy long ſuffering; if thou puniſh mee, I doo hardly ſhow patience, becauſe thou purſueſt drie ſtub-

c Iob.13, 25 ſtubble [c].

Why then dooſt thou not quite take away thy ſeruant? Whie do I liue vpon the earth? that is, whie dooe I dwell among good people, and yet reforme not my life and manners? Why, ſo vnworthilie and daungerouſly keepe I the place of ſome better perſon, and yet walke ſo careleſlie and ſo coldly, in this life?

Thus powre I out this wofull thing which I conſider of, in the eares of my God.

Yet, gratious Lord, crie not out in thine anger againſt me, *cut downe the*
d Luk.13.7 *tree* [d], *and caſt it into the fire.*

I accuſe mine infirmitie before thee, that I may finde grace in thy ſight through my confeſſion.

e Dan.9.9 It is my part to accuſe; but it belongeth vnto thee to ſhew mercie [e]. It is my part to weepe and to ſigh bitterly; but it belongeth vnto thee Lord, mercifullie to comfort.

Wherefore, my Lord and God, either giue mee more grace in this life, or take me ſpeedily out of this world, that the rent bee not wooꝛſer.

For to liue long; and not to ceaſe from

from ill liuing, is but to augment the punishment of hell.

Neither can I awake with such a life as knoweth neither how to proceede in virtue, nor to bewaile wickednes.

For that partie which leadeth an holy and righteous life, is grieued at the heart whensoeuer he offendeth; and that hee may in grace and virtue increase more and more, it is alwaies his desire.

VVhat shall he dooe which knoweth himselfe daily to offend; and that his flesh greeuously dooth rise against the spirit? who also being ouercome with tediousnesse sometime, and cooled with negligence and idlenesse, dooth giue ouer to resist, or else laying aside the spirituall weapons[f], doth follow the swinge of the flesh, whither his owne will doth draw him?

[f] Ephes. 6.11

Alas, Lorde and God, such a one alas draweth nigh vnto the gates of death; and liuing in the flesh, runneth into the death of the soule.

Oh, how is eeerie one to take heede, that hee be not seduced and supplanted of the enemie[g]!

[g] 1. pet. 5.8

No man is sure from temptation[h]

[h] Mat. 6. 13

no

no man is pure from ſinne [i]; but all the ſort of vs are fraile [k].

But, Lord, thou which art almightie [l], and knoweſt all things [m], raiſe vp the broken in heart; and cleanſe the vncleane from all filthines, renue a newe ſpirit within his bowels, that all faintnes and laſineſſe may leaue him, that ſpirituall zeale may returne, and that thy loue may continue vnmooueable within him vnto the end.

For hee onely wanteth thine aſſiſtance, who is peiſed downe with his owne waight [n]; neither is hee able to caſt off the loade of ſinne, vntill thou ſende ſtrength from heauen of power to looſe the hard fetters of carnall affections.

And this my requeſt is to obtaine; for without thy ſpeciall grace, wee ſhall neither leade a good life in this world, nor liue eternallie in the life to come [o].

And whereas I now liue in the bodie, it is no ioie to mee; for better it were for mee to die, than to liue [p], becauſe through this life I am debarred the farder from eternall life, which cannot come, vnleſſe that death doo deſtroie the life preſent, yea

i Iob. 14. 4 pſal. 51. 5. 7
k Iam. 3. 2
l Iob. 13. 3
m Eccluſ. 23 verſe 19 Eſt. 13. 12
n Wiſ. 9. 15
o Rom. 6. 22
p Phil. 1. 23

yea and death also it selfe be destroyed.

Hence it is that my desire is to heauen-ward, and mine heart seeking eternall rest, fetcheth deepe sighes, and cryeth:

It is now enough Lord, take away my soule, which thou hast redeemed with thy pretious bloud [q]. q 1. Pet. 1. 18. 19

Open to me the gate of thy kingdome, and let in a poore pilgrime [r], returning vnto thee from exile. r Heb. 11. 13

Listen to me, Lord, and loose me from the band of the body [s]. s Phil. 1. 23

What should I longer doe here? I am good neither to my selfe, nor to others.

Whie then doe I liue? To my selfe I am burdensome, to others troublesome.

What shall become of mee? I wot not, Lord, whether thou hast foreseene any better thing of me, wherfore my longing should be lingered.

I doe allowe thine ordinance, because it is good: but in mee onely I finde the euill, why it grieueth and troubleth me to liue in the world.

For daike I doe sinne; I heape sinne vpon sinne, and yet as I ought,

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I repent not.

If therefore I were loosed from this bodie of sinne [t], and coupled to thee in heauen, neither should I offend anie more, nor thou be offended, but be praised continually.

t Rom. 6. 6

Notwithstanding as yet thou beарest with mee [u], and shewest all patience.

u 2. Pet. 8. 9,

I know my fault; because through my sinnes I may not enter into thy kingdome. For none vncleane thing shall enter thereinto [x].

x Ephes. 5. 5 Reue. 22. 15,

But when shall I be without sinne? When shall I throughlie bee cleansed, that I may not feare to be prohibited, but reioice rather to be let in?

If I goe not forwarde more zealouslie, nor be more carefull than hetherto I haue bin, I am affraide, mine hope will be little enough.

But Lord, thou which wilt that no man should perish [y], but that all should bee saued, graunt mee more grace to the amendment of my life; and to hope for celestiall blessings, giue mee the spirit of inwarde fatnesse.

y 1. Tim. 2. 4. 2. Pet. 3. 9

Let not mine heart heere reioice after the flesh; but in fearing let it

expect

expect for death.

Let no care or creature hold mee backe: but let thy deſired preſence drawe and comfort me.

Bleſſed is the man which truſteth in thee O Lord [z] : but more bleſſed is he that is paſſed out of this wicked worlde, for he ſhall no more either feele or feare any trouble [a].

z pſa. 37. 34 pſa. 37. 14.

a Reu. 7. 17 Reu. 21, 4

Chap.

The fourth booke

CHAP. 7.

1. A godlie deſire for a good death.

a Pſal.71.5. *Lord, thou art mine hope euen fro my youth* [a]. In this hope I fly vnto thee, vntill the laſt houre and time of my reſolution ſhall come.

Oh that I were ſo well prepared, that I might euen now die vnder the hope of grace!

Oh that I had ended this life with an happie departure; and laied off the loade of this bodie [b]; howe many dangers and feares had I then eſcaped!

b Wiſd.9.15

Happie is the man whome thou haſt choſen and taken vp, who is now gone out of this worlde vnto the father [c]; from baniſhment, vnto a kingdome [d]; from the priſon vnto the palace [e]; from darkeneſſe vnto light [f]; from death vnto life [g]; vnto ſecurity from dangers [h]; from labour vnto reſt [i]; and from all maner miſeries vnto euerlaſting felicitie [k].

c Mat.5.48, d Mat 25.34 e Phil.1.23 f Reue. 22.5 g Reu.21.6 h Reu.7.16 17 i Reu.14.23, k Reue. 22.5

Happie is the ſoule that now enioyeth

of the Imitation of Christ.

ioyeth her rewarde, triumphing in thee her Lord!

But, alas that my countrie is so long kept fro me[l]! l Psal. 120.5

How gratiouslie and mercifullie shouldest thou deale with me, if quickly I were called away, and bidden to come vnto thee, that where thou art I might be also!

Oh that I had beene taken out of this worlde, before euer I had knowen the filthines of the same, and before I was afraide to offend euen in small things; how happie then had I bin! But now the longer heere I liue, the more I wander from thee, & doe sin in too too manie things.

Woe is mee, what haue I doone? Alas, I haue followed the desires of the flesh, and haue drawne vanitie to my selfe with roapes, but godlinesse I haue abandoned, abhorred innocencie, and added sinne vnto sinne: so that now to my griefe I finde that true which I haue sometime read[m], *Woe be to the wicked, it shall be euill with him.* m Isai. 3. 11

Too too late almost I haue returned vnto my GOD, yea verie late it was ere I began to amend, and then too

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too but flowlie went I on; I was not zealous enough in my proceeding, I did not encreaſe in zeale; but, which is woorſe, I waxed cooler and cooler.

Hence it was that many times I was verie loath to die, becauſe my guiltie conſcience ſtill tolde me I had not liued as I ſhould haue done.

Notwithſtanding, in conſideration of the daungerous temptations (whereunto I am ſubiect) and that my ſinnes might not encreaſe, many a time haue I wiſhed for death; and into theſe wordes haue I burſt, ſaying:

Oh that now God in mercie would take mee out of this worlde, that I might ſinne no more vpon earth! Oh that God ſpeedily would vouchſafe to take mee away, and make an end of my labours; in what an happie ſtate ſhould I then be!

But, Lord, all things muſt bee euen as thou wilt. If thou minde to do that which I require, it ſhall forthwith be accompliſhed: but if otherwiſe, thy will be done.

I may vtter out my deſire, and the miſerie which I endure, not as

to him which is ignorant thereof, but that thereby I may finde some comfort to my soule.

I knowe I am not yet ready as I ought to bee, for my conscience is greatly out of quiet.

And what maruell though I, a sinner, doe stand in feare, seeing many euen of the holie fathers were afraid, because thou iudgest not as man doth [n].

But how shall I prepare my selfe? It were good for mee to prepare my selfe against that time, which may come this daie before to morrow for any thing I know. [n] 1. Sam. 16 17 Iohn. 8. 15. 16

Therefore I will more firmely alter my purpose; I will bewaile all my negligences passed; I will sacrifice my self to thee; and wholly & henceforth commend my selfe vnto thy mercy, O Lord.

O Lord, my God, all my works do stand at thy mercie [o]; and without thy mercie I haue no merits. And this is mine hope, this is all my trust. [o] Eph. 1. 6. 7

But how fareth it with a good and pure conscience? What saith the chaste, and deuoute soule? Come, saith thee, Lord Iesus [p], O come, and tarie [p] Reu. 22. 20

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tary not; vntie my sinnes, loose my fetters, bring me out of prison, out of the lake of miserie, and mirie clay [q].

q Psa.40.2

I haue waited patientlie for thee, O Lord; incline to me and heare my crie. Leaue me not any longer in this wicked world.

Let it content thee that hitherto I haue striuen, that so long I haue bin in exile; that I haue not deserued to enioy thee, nor to see thee face to face [r].

r 1.Cor.13, verse. 12.

Graunt me to enioy the long desired ioy, which no time shall ende, nor troubles ouershadow.

Reuel.22.4

Shew mee thy countenance, which the angels continually do behold [s].

s Mat.18.10.

Let thy voice be heard in mine eares, which they without ceassing do heare.

Come Lord Iesu, and take me out of this forraine countrie; call mee wretch home vnto my countrie [t], and restore me a sinner vnto my former puritie.

t Heb.11.13

Come gratious Redeemer [u], make mee partaker of thine eternall glorie.

u Mat.1.21.

It is hie time that I returne vnto thee, it is now time that I commend my bodie to the earth, whereout it

Was

was taken [x]. x Gen.2,7

The matter is not great where the body be laide, or how it be handled, if so be the soule bee safe, and come vnto thee.

Let my spirit doo well, which I commend into thine hands; and let my flesh rest in hope to bee raised vp againe in the last daie [y]. For where- y 1.Cor.15. verse 51. 52.53
soeuer it be buried, it can neuer bee far, or hid from thee.

Remoeue from mee the companie of men, and ioyne mee to the societie of thy saintes. For this temporall life is irkesome to mee: but to thinke of the day of eternall glorie, reioyceth mine heart.

Oh, let not the olde serpent [z] z Reue.12.9
withstand mee at my departure out of Egypt; let not the enemie barke against mee in the gate: let neither Satan with his ouglie sight terrifie, nor the horror of death trouble mee, but let thine holy angels faithfully assist, stoutly aide, valiantly protect, louinglie receiue, and ioiefullie bring mee vnto the euerlasting felicitie of thy celestiall Paradise.

And mercifull, louely, and blessed Iesu, doo thou gratiouslie. I beseech thee, behold mee; and cast

mee not out of the number of thy seruants: but remember, ô Sonne of God, howe thou hast redeemed
a Eph. 1. 3. 7 me with thy pretious blood [a].
1. Pet. 1. 18. 19

Receiue mee into glorie, and that in thy mercy and goodnes, because greatly haue I wished to solemnize a passeouer with thee.

Oh happie day of my desired reward! Come blessed houre of blessed passage, which long I haue desired, and kept before mine eyes.

What now haue the troubles and
b Rom. 8. 18 afflictions in the worlde hurt mee [b]? What am I the woorse for the contempt, labor, and humiliation for thy name sake?

Thou hast bin my life, and nowe
c Phil. 1. 24 death will be to mee an aduantage [c], and to bee with thee in thy kingdome will be absolute felicitie.

Now praise and glory bee to thee,
d Ioh. 11. 25 who art the life of such as liue [d], the
e Act. 2. 26 hope of those which die [e], the saluation and rest of all which trust in thee [f].

Psal. 17. 7
Psal. 34. 8
Pro. 16. 20

of the Imitation of Christ.

CHAP. 8.

A Meditation of one dead vnto the worlde, yet alive in Christ.

Turne awaye mine eies from regarding vanitie [a].

Oh Iesu, which art the true life [b], which neuer shall haue ende; giue me grace that through loue of thee I may bee consumed, through loue wounded, through loue killed, that the flesh preuaile not ouer me. a Psa.119.37. b Iohn.11.5

I am not as yet throughly dead to the worlde, but the olde man yet liueth in mee [c], raising vp within mee much contention, and desires of manifold euils, and making the nightes bitter, and the dayes tedious vnto me. c Rom.7.23

Oh, when will it fall out, that boldlie I may say, I thought my selfe as a dead man? For he which dead is, doth neigh neither the praises of men, nor the reproches of the malignant, because he is dead.

Hee which touching the flesh is

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dead, neither ſpeaketh, nor ſmelleth, nor taſteth, nor exerciſeth any work, yea he neither heareth alſo the vanity of this world: again he regardeth not curious and beautiful things enticing vnto the loue of ſome vile thing vpon earth.

And he which is dead to the world, is not in the world, but in GOD to whome he liueth; euen as Paule to ſ beloued diſciples doth ſay [d], *Yee are dead, and your life is hid with Chriſt in God.*

d Coloſſ. 3, 3

This man doth ſo ſpeake, ſo think, ſo behold things without, as though they were not. For the things which are ſeene, are temporall, and vaine [e]: but the things which are not ſeene, are eternall [f].

e 1. Ioh. 2. 17

f 2. Cor. 4. 18.

Hither dooth hee caſt his eie; hither doth hee haſten; hither is his deſire; for theſe things doth hee labor; to attaine theſe things is all his ſtudie [g].

g Col. 3. 1. 2.

Theſe things hee wiſheth, theſe things hee loueth, theſe things hee ſeeketh, theſe things hee ſauoureth, euen which are within, and ſecrete, to wit, great good things, ſoueraigne, and eternall things, of which hee cannot thinke too often, becauſe they

they are exceeding pretious, & sweete and delectable, and more than vtterable [h]. h 1. Cor. 2. 9

This man is farre estranged from present things [i], and breatheth altogether after things eternall [k], hauing the dominion ouer the sensuall appetite. i Gal. 6. 14 k Colos. 3. 2

For the flesh seeketh outward, desireth pleasant, loueth present, loatheth absent, flieth all sharpe and bitter things, which notwithstanding are good for the soule [l]. Whence it commeth that it will not suffer the spirit to be at rest, but layeth before it sundry phantasies, which are scarse to be spoken, and in truth not to bee accounted off. l Rom. 8. 4 5. &c.

But hee which is endued with the grace of spirituall fortitude, may with more ease subdue the insolent motions of the flesh, singing in the worde of the diuine power [m], *The Lorde is with me, therefore I will not feare what flesh can doe vnto me.* m Psa. 118. 6

Therefore albeit this sensualitie doth moue battell, and the voyce of the flesh doth secretly murmure [n]; yet doth not the spirituall man easilie consent; for greater is the force of the diuine loue which inwardlie n Rom. 8. 23.

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doth comfort.

This man now and then so sweetlie, so stronglie, and so earnestlie is drawne, rauished, and in loue with God, that scarcely hee doth see, and perceiue the things about him, and be heard in the world: because he is not there, but else where [o]: not belowe, but aloft euen with God, and in God, which mooueth the spirite within him, and erecteth, and as it were carrieth it away in a fierie chariot, that at the length it may enioye him in an happie, and holie, and long wished desire of his heart.

o Mat. 6. 21.

This man is sildome found (idle) abroade, because his friende hath borne him away. There quietlie and alone he heareth his speech, euen the speech of his beloued, & greatly doth reioyce to heare the voice of his vnsuspected spouse.

Neither straight-way doth he cast his phiall vpon the ground to drawe vp vanitie: but hideth the founde treasure, and shutteth it vnder lock & key, that the foote of pride come not in, and so all virtue doe perish. For thus he saith to him [p], *Set me as a seal on thine heart*, and so forth as it followeth in that place.

p Sal. 8. 8. 6

It

of the Imitation of Christ.

It is good to seale the heart, and to keepe it, least the beloued go back, and flie away: because he seeketh & visiteth aboue all, a pure and an humble heart [q].

[q] Mat 5. 8

These things hee thinketh with himselfe, and is astonished at that good thing which passeth all sense, and gifts. Yea still hee wandereth, and enquireth diligently, what thing is this? and exceedingly reioyceth, for that manna is come downe from heauen.

And hee wich ministreth true bread from heauen [r], doth giue also a good vnderstanding to the taster, that hee may knowe, how euerie good giuing and euerie gift is from aboue, and commeth downe from the father of lights [s].

[r] Mat. 11. 29
[r] Iohn 6. 31 32.
[s] Iam. 1. 17

This worde now, saith hee, is from God [t]. Without him there is nothing. I haue all things from him.

[t] Iohn. 1. 3

Furthermore (this spirituall man) hee wondereth, and lamenteth that hee so lightlie esteemeth so excellent a good thing, by the which he is not a little blessed; and whie also he dooth not oftener bend his heart to heare and to see that, than the which nothing is more sweete, and

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blessed to be desired.

And woulde to God hence-forth I might thus doe. For this exceedingly doth delight me, and more will delight me, the more I giue my selfe vnto these meditations.

Oh that my beloued would come into mine heart, that I might taste the sweetnes of his apples.

Oh that hee would decline vnto mee and shewe himselfe to mee, and mee to himselfe! Hee is my felicitie, and mine only delight.

Now begin I to couet, and desire, and greatly to loue this good thing, in whome all good things are [u]; this ioye, in whome is all ioye; this one thing, in whom are all thinges, small and great, base and hie; yet nothing created, but without all conceipt of man, the beginning and the end of all the good things which hee hath formed [x].

[u] Act. 17. 28

[x] Reuel. 1. 8.

17 Hence it is that nowe and then I woulde thoroughly bee repleniſhed with this good thing, and filled with that so heauenly ioie, and I couet after a sort euen to bee swallowed vp and consumed vtterly of him, that mine insatiable desire might once be satisfied in such sort, that nothing in

me

mee might bee mine, but his onelie whose the fire and heate of loue is, whose this woonderfull worke is also, that so I might the more greedily be carried to him-ward, and be made one spirit together with him.

Notwithstanding, all this doth not puffe vp the godly man, or make him to thinke himselfe some-what, or to despise others, or to iudge inferiors: for hee knoweth that whatsoeuer hee hath, commeth not of himselfe, but it is the free gift of God [y], that thereby he is not to waxe proud, when he perceiueth himselfe to be so comforted of the Lord. [y] 1. Cor. 4. 7

For hee seeketh not the praise of man, he careth not for foraine fauor, but hee seeketh the beloued, his praise and his fauour he onelie desireth, in whome hee hath all thinges, and shall finde more than all these things: because hee preferreth his loue, his sweetenes, and the ioiefull enioying of him before all transitorie thinges; and his honour hee seeketh and sigheth for aboue all things else. And therefore he cannot bee proude, nor boast of any thing.

(God) hee is his glory, his praise, and his comfort [z]. (God euen) hee [z] 2. cor. 1. 31

is his true and perfecte ioy, his soueraigne & sole happinesse all his desire and perfection. And which more is, he would haue others also thus to reioyce with him, and to enioy such felicity without end both in this world, and in heauen too.

For this is his desire and praier, that God woulde reueale himselfe to all men, and that he would vouchsafe to conuert and draw all vnto him, that he alone might be praised & glorified for he is both loue it selfe [a], and such a fountain of loue, as neuer can be drawen dry. For hee doth more loue all men, than all men (set together) can loue him.

[a] 1. Ioh. 4. 8

Notwithstanding, it liketh him well, if any man haue a desire to loue him from the bottom, although hee cannot sound vnto the depth. For he in louing deuoureth, vanquisheth, & surpasseth all.

of the Imitation of Christ.

Chap.9.

A desire of the soule, that no earthly creature may carrie her away vnto vanitie.

Beho'd, I would take my flight far off, and lodge in the mountaines [a] Oh how profitable, how sweete, and how ioyfull a thing it is to sit solitary in silēce, to talke with God, and to enioy the onely good thing, in which are all good things [b]! a Psa.55.7 b Iam.1.17

Would to God I were so conioyned to that all simple and onely good thing, that I might be mooued with none affections and distractions of transitorie things, nor curiously fasten mine eyes vpon any creature, and visible thing!

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliuer mee from the bodie of this death [c]? c Rom.7.24

Alas, how often dieth my soule for the creatures which shee loueth! oh manie times she forgetteth her creator, and is carried awaie for their sakes.

Mine

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Mine vnſtable minde now willeth this thing, now that thing, now it is heere, now there, ſeeking but not finding reſt in creatures: becauſe there is no creature which can yeeld
d Eccles. 1. 8 full ſatietie to be enioyed [d], though it hath ſome delectation for vſe.

The heart of man is vnſearchable,
e Hier. 17. 9 and who can knowe it [e]? O Lord, thou knoweſt the thoughts of men,
f pſa. 94. 11 that they are vaine [f].

g 1. Tim. 1 verſe 17 O eternall God [g], moſt hie and
h pſa. 139. 7 8. &c. infinite [h], the creator [i] and gouernour of all things [k], I am thy crea-
i Act. 17. 24 ture [l] which thou haſt made by thy
k Pſa. 97. 1 power.
l pſal. 100. 3 pſal. 119. 73 Thou haſt made me that I ſhould loue thee, and gladly would I loue thee, but I cannot as I would.

For I am fettered with vaine loue, and with clammie affections of tranſitorie things; from which, while I would rid my ſelfe, hardly or not at all can I ſo doo without great paine.

Oh howe ſoone would they flie and periſh, if thou Chriſt, wert ſweet, and didſt ſauour in my noſthrils.

Notwithſtanding ſomtime through the ſight of the minde I doo behold thine inuiſible thinges by the crea-
n Rom. 1. tion of the world [m], and thee alſo the

ſoue-

ſoueraigne felicitie, the true and eternall God.

And gladly would I continue in theſe meditations, but foorthwith I knowe not with what winde I am blowen away from them, and helde downe [n] like a miſer by the loue and waight of viſible things. [n] Wiſ. 9.15

Behold, I firmely doo purpoſe in mine hart, as it were making a couenant betweene mee and thee, that for thy noble and pretious loue, I will neither loue nor looke vpon anie creature, but will contemne all thinges, yea my ſelfe and all mine [o]: but ſtraight waie worldlie, fleſhlie, and familiar cogitations doo aſcend into mine heart, as though in them were a certaine felicitie, and as though, if I contemned them, I were to forgo ſome great good thing: and theſe beare a good countenance, but they hide the wofull ende, ſhowing what is preſent, but hiding the inconuenience that will enſue, as though euery where and in all creatures thou art to be ſought, and that nothing were to be neglected or deſpiſed, which hath bin made of my God: and thus they withdrawe mee oftentimes from my purpoſe, and at [o] Rom. 8,35

the

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the length vtterly ſeduce me.

Oh howe vaine, and deceiptfull, and almoſt nothing, are things which now ſtand and flouriſh, proued
p 1.Ioh.2.15 to bee p, which flying awaie after
16 their ſudden ioyes, doe leaue mee a-
17 mong the thornes and briars of a guiltie conſcience.

But woe is mee, Lorde, yea woe againe to me becauſe ſo ſoone I haue beleeued and aſſented to vanitie, and ſo quicklie forſaken thee, which art
q Iohn.14.6 the truth q.

Oh, howe greatly haue I ſinned euen in this, that I haue not ſticken to thee alone, neglecting all thinges
r Luk.18.29 elſe r!
30 For I was made to loue and to enioy thee: but by following after creatures inordinately, I haue loſt thee, and found no reſt for mine hart in
ſ Eccles.1.8 them neither ſ.

But turne me vnto thee, ô Lord, and leaue mee not in earthlie things, thou which haſt vouchſafed to promiſe celeſtiall thinges to ſuch as fol-
t Mat.19.8 Luke 9.23 lowe thee t.

CHAP. 10.

1. A comparison betweene earthly, and heauenly ioies; 2. with a praier for grace to contemne this transitory world.

MY soule hath refused comfort [a]. a psal. 77.

Wander thou not after deceiptful vanities & madnes, ô my soule, but turne vnto the Lorde thy God, for hee is the fountaine of all comfort [b]. b 2.cor. 1. 3

Whatsoeuer thou seekest either among men, or among creatures, thou shalt leese it, and shalt well perceiue it to perish. For though I graunt, they maie yeelde some shewe of comfort, yet sure I am nothing dooth continue [c]. c 1.Ioh.2.15 16.17

Why so vainely wilt thou bee deceiued? It is egregious follie to beg of a begger, when he that is rich will giue abundantly. Euery creature is but poore to minister comfort vnto vs; but God which is rich in mercie [d] giueth to all men liberallie [e], and reprocheth no man, if thou for thy part diligently doo seeke [f], and patiently 1.cor. 7. 31 d Ephes. 2.4 e Iam. 1.5 f Matth. 7.7

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tientlie expect his leisure.

Returne, ô my soule, returne
g Gen. 8. 9 downe vnto Noah in the arke[g], euen vnto Christ in thine heart, because it is not good to abide long abroade.

See thou refuse outward comfort,
h 1. Ioh. 2. 15 if inwardly thou wilt bee refreshed[h].

Doo not thou with the Crowe abide
i Gen. 8. 7 without the arke[i], but with speede auoide the carcase. Returne thou an hungred, and Christ so will feede
k Iohn. 6. 31 32. 35 thee with the bread of life[k].

If vrgent necessitie, or weakenesse hold thee abroade, take heede thou make no staie, but with speede get thee home, least thou bee either ouerwhelmed with the floud of words, or comprehended in the snares of diuelish tentation.

Manie traps are laid for the wandering soule; and great safetie hath the quicke returning dooue: which not finding where to set her foote, made haste to come back vnto Noah
Gen. 8. 9 in the shippe[l].

Go thou therefore vnto thy secret place and abide there, yea let it bee a griefe for thee to be elsewhere.

Oh blessed is the soule, which hath a cleere conscience before God
m Mat. 5. 8 [m], and is not delighted with anie

vaine

vaine thing [n], which is neither polluted with louing any thing [o], nor wearied with extreamely hating any man!

n Luk. 18 29 30.
o 1. Ioh. 2. 15. 16

Blessed is the soule that seeketh no comfort of creatures, but fixeth all her hope in the Lord!

p Mat. 5 22. 23. &c.
q ps. 40. 4.

Blessed is the soule which refuseth all outward and temporall quietnesse, and whatsoeuer belongeth vnto the welfare of the body; and which for the loue of CHRIST doth willingly embrace both payne and pouertie [r].

r Mat. 19. 29

Blessed is the soule which cõmendeth her selfe to God, that hee may doo with her euen as hee thinketh good!

Blessed is the soule which at no time seeketh her own glory [s], which desireth at no time to haue her owne wil done; but continually mindeth, loueth, and preferreth the glory & will of God aboue all things.

s Ier. 9. 24. 1. Cor. 1. 31

Blessed is the soule which dooth estraunge her selfe from whatsoeuer is temporall [t], and keepeth her selfe pure and vndefiled before God in all her dealings [u].

t 1. Ioh. 2. 15. 16.
u Psa. 15. 1. 2

O reioyce and be thou much glad, thou which art such a soule: for thou maist

maiſt abide in ſecret and celeſtiall cogitations, and ſo magnifie the Lord, day and night.

Bleſſed and bleſſed againe is the ſoule whoſe deſires are to heauē-ward [x], who'e hands and armes are out-[z] ſtretched euen as the two wings of the Cherubins [y]; whoſe eies are pute to behold God [z], whoſe inward power and ſtrength doth go altogether, and aſcend, and returneth not, vntill it haue him whome onely ſhe loueth before all things! And when ſhe hath found him, ſhe followeth him whither ſoeuer he will haue her!

x Coloſ. 3. v.
y Eze. 11. 22
z Mat. 5. 8

And when he ſpeaketh, hee reioiceth to heare her make anſwere, ſaying; I am thine onely beloued, of thee elected. I am thine exceeding great reward [a]. Be thou neither proud in proſperitie, nor impatient in aduerſitie. Conſider howe they which loue me, are comforted of me. How ſweetly, thinkeſt thou, I will entreate them, when they ſhall be receiued vnto the eternall reſt, after that the troubles of the bodie and ſoule are laid aſide!

Gen. 15. 1

Oh that I enioyed ſuch pleaſure, as dooth the holie ſoule, when the ſenſes

senses beeing asleepe, she is carried aloft, and eleuated aboue her selfe, beloued, and coupled to GOD by the bonde of most heartie friendship! O my God, which art the treasure of mine heart [b], thou knowest right wel how this woulde bee the onely comfort of mine inward griefe. But thou art the giuer, and the pourer in of this oyntment. b Mat. 6. 21

Thou teachest [c], thou exhortest, thou cherishest, thou comfortest, thou carriest, thou vpholdest, thou guidest out and bringest backe, thou doost with the soule whome thou hast chosen, euen as thou wilt, and whatsoeuer thou doost and wilt, it is all good. c 2. Tim. 3. 16

But I who am as a sowre vessell, altogether vnworthie to receiue the infusion of thy good spirit, doe humblie crane that plentifullie it may so spout forth vpon me, that I may both taste the sweetnesse of thine inward loue, and also perceiue those sacred pleasures, the which, I doubt not, the religious soule doth feele by thy grace.

I did smell the celestiall persumes a far off, when I did meditate certain inward cogitations of the minde concer-

The fourth booke

concerning the ſoule: but Lord, thou knoweſt how ſildome, how little I do thinke of eternall things, howe often wordes doe wither, howe rude the vnderſtanding, how vnquiet the conſcience, howe my hart is troubled, darkened and irreligious, and onelie through mine owne default.

Notwithſtanding ſometime ſeeking a way vnto ſpiritual matters, hauing taken my cogitations with mee in ſecret, I begin ſeriouſlie to call into my remẽbrance the good things of the bleſſed ſoule, how greate are ỹ celeſtiall ioyes, and ſpirituall delights which are in her heart; what peace, what tranquillitie, what hope, and reioycing in God her Sauiour, whoſe wordes be ſweete, and face beautifull. And theſe cogitations, though ſhort, they endure, yet whẽ they come bleſſed is the houre.

And I thus thinking and thou enlightning my darknes, I do finde iuſt complaints vppon my ſelfe, & by priuie holes of grace I perceiue how ſuch and ſuch is the ſoule inwardly vnited vnto thee, & that ſo and ſo thou haſt ſpoken to her.

She is ſtill from all things ſenſible,

and

and thou in the spirit speakest to her of inuisible matters.

Shee seemeth as it were to be forsaken of all creatures, and after an vnspeakeable maner thou dost comfort her.

So that I said againe in mine hart, Wo to the sinfull soule [c], to the grieued conscience [d], to the man which is neither hot nor colde [e], destitute of the light of grace, and of spirituall cōfort, seeking teares, and yet finding none.

c Deu. 27. 26 Galat 3. 10
d Pro. 3. 33 Prou. 24. 19.
e Reue. 3. 15. 16

But peace be to him which vnfeinedlie doth loue Christ, & neuer turneth aside the eies of his heart from his Sauiour [f]: but continuallie seeketh the things which are pleasing in his eies.

f Coloss. 3. 2

For he shall walke in peace and equitie, and no stranger shall participate of his pleasure. He shall well perceiue that his rest is good, and taste how sweete his Lord God is, in whom he trusteth [g]. Hee shall set him farre from outward tumults, and with hartie desire expect his prosperous comming. Lo, thus worketh the Lord in his elected vessels!

g Psal. 34. 8

Hee which commeth vnto him shall not returne emptie awaie: for cheere-

cheerefully he beſtoweth vpon the thirſtie, drinke, and bread vpon the hungry [h].

h Mat. 25. 35.

O my God, when thou entreſt into the houſe of the ſoule which loueth thee, wilt thou not feede her with thy milke? yea and bring her ſometime beſide her ſelfe, through thine abundant ſweetneſſe, to the taking of thee without any corporall ſimilitude!

O truth, truth, of what force & power is loue!

Then wilt thou ſpeake thy word to her all ſecretlie, and ſhowe the things that ſhall be, and haue beene in moſt happie charitie, and fruition, where the wordes of man ſhall no more be heard.

From thenceforth thou wilt cauſe her no whit to doubt anie more of eternall reſt, and of the fellowſhip of ſaints: but nowe by deferring the token of ſpeciall grace, thou makeſt her the more able to hope for the things ſhe ſeeth not [i], and to deſpiſe preſent things which by ſenſe ſhe cõprehendeth.

i Rõ. 8. 24.

O mercifull God, bee mindefull of me a poore begger, euen of thy great mercie [k]; and ſende the true bread from,

k 1. Cor. 1.

of the Imitation of Christ.

from heauen [l], thy good word so full of comfort and grace. [l] Ioh. 6. 31 32. &c.

CHAP. XI.

1. That all comfort, and pleasures are in God. 2. A prayer that all people may glorifie the Lord. 3. The blessed state of good men 4. That wee are to be ready against the comming of our sauior Christ.

ALl my bones shall saie, Lord, who is like vnto thee [a]?

There is one [b], & like to him there is none [c], euen my GOD it is [d], to whome, whatsoeuer is compared, is nothing [e].

My God is entirely to bee loued, and a most faithfull friend, which neuer forsaketh the soule that loueth him [f], but continuallie abideth with her for company. And if sometime he hide himselfe, and suffer her to be troubled, it is not done of him to destroy, but to trie her [g], to purge her [h], and to instruct her [i]. So that euen then he forsaketh not, but the more wisely instructeth, that euerie one may

[a] psa. 35. 10
[b] Deut. 6. 4
[c] 1. Kin. 8. 23
[d] Ioh. 20. 17
[e] Pro. 3. 15 Isai. 46. 9.
[f] Ioh. 13. 1
[g] Iam 1. 12
[h] Wis. 3 6 6
[i] psl. 119. 71

may see what he is of himselfe, and how farre he is come forward (in religion.)

O my beloued, thou art all faire & louelie, but not to the flesh, but to the minde; nor to the eie or sense but to the faithfull soule, to him which hath a pure heart [k], to him which is altogither addicted vnto things inuisible & spirituall [l].

k Mat. 5. 8.

l 2. Cor. 4 18.

So that whoso desireth to be vnited to thee by a religious affection, he must of necessitie mortifie in himselfe all fleshly motions, and aboue all retaine a pure conscience. For thou art much displeased then, when a man doth goe vnto fraile creatures to seek consolation.

And therefore thou callest me inwardlie to loue thee [m], and thou commandest that I waite for thee: for then I shall finde thee, when I doe humble my selfe, and wish that which thou wilt.

m Luk. 10, 27

And this shall bee all my felicitie, euen freely to serue thee, neither dreading anie losse, nor seeking anie gaine: because thou allowest that soule which purely doth loue [n].

n Mat. 10. 7

Oh blessed is hee, which both in life and death sticketh onely to thee!

But

of the Imitation of Christ.

But as for me I am far-awaie cast oftentimes from thy fauor by louing, and that both inordinatelie, and vndiscreetely, transitory things. But that I maie not perish with them, I with all speede will returne, and behold in them thy glorie [o], and direct all my cogitations to theeward.

O my Lord, & God, which of nothing hast made all things [p], giue me grace for all things to praise thy name.

For all power [q], wisedome [r], goodnes and mercie is thine [s]; thine also is euerlasting glorie and maiestie [t].

Thy kingdome is an euerlasting kingdome [u]; and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages.

Thou ordereſt all things [x], both things aboue, and things in earth.

Thou knoweſt all thinges [y], and possessest all things [z]; nothing dooth resist [a], or trouble thee: but quietly thou ruleſt the world, and makeſt the rebellious to stoup, and to serue [b].

Thou art priuie of all things which are doone in the world [c]; and before they were doone thou kneweſt their endes [d].

Thou art the God both of heauen and earth [e], the creatour of thinges

[o] Ro.1,21
[p] Gen.1,1 2,&c. Iohn 1.1 2 Act.17.24
[q] Reue.4.8
[r] Iam.1.17
[s] Ma.19.17
[t] Reu.7.12
[u] pſ.145.13
[x] Wiſ. 8,1
[y] Eccliu. 23 verſe. 19
[z] pſal.95.4 Eccles.9.1
[a] dan.4,32
[b] Wiſd. 12 3.4 &c.
[c] Dan.9.3 12
[d] Eccliu.23 19
[e] Iſa.46.10 [e] Ezra.5.11

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f Psa 89. 11 visible and inuisible f, the gouernor
ps. 1 5. 15 of the whole world g, and the dispo-
g psa. 47. 1 ser of the seasons h.

2 O blesse thy seruants, I beseech
6.&c. thee, dispersed far and wide ouer the
h Ecclu. 43 world, yet seruing thee most religi-
5.6.&c. ouslie. Make them (constantly) to sound forth thy praise, and in all places with one voice to glorifie thy name.

Stir vp their hearts firmely to loue thee; and graunte that all their enterprises may take a good end.

Oh, how gratious, and how good
i 1. Cor. 2 9 art thou to such as loue thee i! howe
k ps 34. 8. sweete art thou to them which taste thee k!

They which haue felt thy sweetnes, knowe thereby the better how both to thinke and speake For thy sweetnes surpasseth all sweetnes; and thy pleasures dooe sweeten all bitternes.

O Lord my God, holie men haue spoken, and Prophets haue talked of thee.

All the godlie from the worlds beginning haue beleeued in thee, haue serued thee, haue glorified thee both with sacrifices and oblations, they haue praised and blessed thine

thine holy name: because they haue both acknowledged thee to bee the Creator and Maker of the vniuersall world, and also trusted in thee aboue all things [l].

[l] Heb. 11. 2 3. &c.

They haue knowen thee in their visions, for thou hast reuealed thy name to them; and beside thee they knewe no God. They obserued the lawe of thy commandements, which thou gauest them.

They followed not the foolish imaginations of false Gods: but they worshipped thee which liuest for euer [m], the creator of all things [n].

[m] 1. Tim. 1. 17
[n] Act. 17. 24 Heb. 4. 3

They lifted vp their voice to thee with thankesgiuing: because from on high thou soundest in their eares, saying [o], *I am that I am. Before mee there was no God formed* [p], *neither shall there bee after mee.* I haue ordained the things which shall be, and I forget not that so euer is past.

[o] Exod. 3. 14
[p] Isa. 43. 10

This when they heard and vnderstood, they cast the eies of their faith farre off, beleeuing that GOD will liue vs, and that he which shall come, will come, and will not tarie [q].

[q] Heb. 10. 37

Knowing these things aforehand they were not a little comforted, and

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maruelouſlie aſtoniſhed, at the preſence of the glorie to come, they fainted. But afterwarde comming by little and little to themſelues, & with ioie beholding the power of God approching, they ſaide, Hee is, euen he is the Lord our God, and wee haue none other. Hee hath taken vs, and hee will ſaue vs. Hee cannot denie himſelfe [r], becauſe hee is faithfull. As we haue heard, ſo we haue ſeene [s]: as wee haue beleeued, ſo wee haue ſpoken, and borne witneſſe to the truth [t].

r 2.Tim.2.13
s 1.Ioh.1.1.3
t Ioh.3.11.

Once the Lord did ſpeake, and it was done [u]. Hee ſaide, My counſaile ſhall ſtand [x]: but yours ſhall come to naught, O ye ſonnes of men [y].

u Pſa.33.9.
x Iſa.46.10
y Pſ.33.10.

Woe vnto them which imagine euill [z], and afterward make a ſcoffe at the word of God!

z Mich.2.1.

Woe vnto you which doe feine a religion out of your owne braine, and are exalted in your owne power!

Heare the word of the Lord, ye which ſerue the Lord: know ye that he hath a controuerſie with the inhabitants of the earth [a].

a Hoſ.4.1

To turne awaie your ſelues, it is not good; ſtand yee therefore and conſider

consider his waies.

Returne you and come vnto him, so will hee ioyfullie receiue you into fauor; for the Lord is gratious and mercifull [b].

He keepeth not his anger as man dooth [c], but pardoneth all sinnes, yea and moreouer he restoreth the former grace with the later.

Onely returne you with all your harts: and dedicate your selues whollie and vnfeinedlie to his seruice. Thus doe the Saincts speake in mine eares.

That which musick is at a banquet, and sweete smelling frankincense in a censar: euen that is the word of god in a pure hart.

And thy Saincts, Lord, filled with thy spirit, haue thus sounded forth the memorie of thine abundant sweetnes; and haue left their wordes vnto vs to be sounded abroade.

But my speech often-time is stopped, so that it hath no passage to ascend. But if that fire come from aboue, then shall my tongue be hot: & if it once be enflamed, I shall forthwith be consumed.

I shall not be able to stand in the presence thereof; for as the winde

b Exod. 34. 6
c Ionas. 4. 2
Hos. 11. 9

driueth away chaffe, ſo ſhall ſorrowe be expelled from the hart. And as the ruſt by the fire: ſo ſhall my ſinnes be conſumed.

The fire of God which conſumeth all things, ſhall ſweepe the floore of mans heart Deſcende, and get vp; touch me a little, and I ſhall flee.

Things paſſed ſhall be as though they had neuer beene, and that to come ſhall not be accompted of; for all ſinnes ſhall vtterly be forgotten.

Old things ſhall paſſe away, newe ſhall come abundantlie; holie deſires ſhall encreaſe, and riſe vp on all ſides, whereſoeuer the good ſpirit ſhall blowe.

Feare ſhall depart, loue ſhall poſſeſſe the hearts of all; all affliction ſhall ceaſſe: for this alteration is by the hand of God.

Therfore that which I ſay is not to mine owne, but to his praiſe.

The penſiue hath comfort; the hungry. bread; the thirſtie, drinke;

The ſick is healed; the wauering aſſiſted; the weake, ſtrengthened; the wearie, quieted; the hopeleſſe, comforted; the complainer, pitied;

To the blinde, ſight; to the wandering, a readie waie; to the knocker,

the

the gate is opened.

He which doubted, is nowe reſolued; hee which ſtaggered, is now ſtrengthened; he that diligentlie enquired, is now entertained ioyfullie by mother charitie. The friend cōmeth more ioyfullie to meete, than is the ſoule deſirous to ſpeake with him.

Lo now am I preſent, ſaith hee, ſay on, what newe thing hath fallen out? What, haue you forgotten what you are to ſuffer and to doe for my ſake? L.

Yet this ſtayed me not, beeing deſirous to goe forward with him. So ſtraight-waie I mounted aloft, and forgat all mine affliction. B.

He would not by and by diſcomfort the partie ſo longing to abide with him: but with gentle words he ſaid, that in due time it ſhould bee performed.

Thy deſire is good, and requeſt vnto me doth like mee well: notwithſtanding, it may not preſently bee graunted. L.

Go thy way, and get home to thine owne houſe, and declare to thine acquaintance what the Lord hath done for thee.

Saie vnto them, Prepare your

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harts euerie one of you; and laie downe the heauie burden of ſinne; and be yee warie, and ſtrong to reſiſt the ſnares of Satan [d].

d iam, 4.7

Watch and pray, leaſt yee fall into tentation [e].

c Mat, 26. 41 Mark. 14, 38

I will come ſhortly, looke that I finde you readie.

Lo, I haue warned you aforehand.

CHAP. 12.

1. The deſire of the ſoule after God. 2. *The properties of God by the ſundry* titles aſcribed vnto him. 3. None commeth vnto God, vnleſſe God draweth him.

a pſa, 35, 3

SAy vnto my ſoule, *I am thy ſaluation* [a].

Oh, of what excellencie art thou, my ſoule, what wonderfull virtue is hidden in thee, that thou canſt neuer be at reſt, vntill thou haue attained perfect happines, and found the laſt end which thou ſo deſireſt! which once being knowen and found out, the care is gone.

Oh happineſſe aboue all happines; O end without end, when ſhall I both

of the Imitation of Christ.

both without measure, & euerlastingly enioy thee!

I finde manie good things in this world. But they continue not [b], neither doo they satisfie my desire. [c].

But one thing is necessarie [d]. This one thing is that I seek; this one thing I desire.

For one thing are all things [e]; and of one thing are all thinges [f]. If I get this thing, I shall be content: but if I enioie it not, I shall continuallie bee tossed, because manie thinges cannot satisfie me.

What is this one thing? I am not able to saie what it is; sure I am I desire that, than which, nothing either is, or maie be imagined either better or greater [g].

For this is not one thing among many thinges; but one thing aboue all thinges [h]. And it is my GOD, to whome if I sticke, I shall doo well [i].

To him, I say to him I crie, when I saie, *Saie vnto my soule, I am thy saluation* [k]

O my soule, my longing soule, what more desirest thou? Is it not better for thee to cleaue vnto one thing, than vnto manie things? Of one thing are many thinges [l], but

[b] 1. cor. 7. 31
1 Iohn. 1. 15 16
[c] Eccles. 1. 8
[d] Lu. 10. 42
[e] Isai. 43. 7
[f] Gen. 1. 1. 2 &c. Iohn 1. 1. 3
[g] Esa. 46. 5 6. &c. Iob. 41. 1. 2 &c.
[h] Ezra. 5. 11
[i] psal. 73. 28
[k] psal. 35. 3
[l] Act. 17 24

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one thing is not of manie things.

Ceasse to seeke manie things, ioine thee to one, stick vnto one: for in one thing all things consist.

Let others enquire after manifold and diuers outward things: but doo thou seeke one inward good thing, and it is sufficient.

m Mat 22,5. Lu. 14,18 Lo, this man seeketh a farme m; that man trauelleth about his marchandise; another heapeth vp much gold and siluer; another hunteth after pleasures and preferment; another visiteth his friends and kindred; another is merie with his acquaintance; another rideth vnto cities and castles; another doth long to see diuers countries of the world; another desireth wisedome, another preferment, another principalitie, another a kingdome: and thus one wisheth one thing, another man another thing, euen as aswell among the spirituall sort, as among the secular. But few dooe seeke one thing, and (other things) purelie and simplie for one thing. And therefore they neither dooe finde anie sure peace; nor yet sauor the inward grace of the spirit.

For so manie as are (the seruants)

of Christ, dooe couet not temporall, not earthly things [n], as though they were then iolly and glorious fellowes, if they abounded therewith.

n Colos. 3. 1.

What then? wilt thou saie that the things which they seeke for, doo touch thee. O deuout soule? in truth thou canst not

For my part, I detest all these things: for my good thing is but one thing; I loue but one thing, I require but one thing; and this one thing is better to mee than all other things either in heauen or earth.

If thou hast founde such a good thing, my counsel is, that you hold and keepe it, for whose sake you haue contemned all things. For hauing that, it shall not grieue you to want other things; naie, you will iudge it reason for the getting thereof, that you dooe both giue [o], and suffer all things [p].

o Phil. 3, 8.
p Rom. 8, 35 & 38

Now therefore, ô my soule, seeke thou after so singular, and superexcellent a good thing.

So long as you liue in the flesh, you are of necessitie to seeke: because that cannot too carefullie bee sought for, which can at no time sufficiently be comprehended [q].

q 1. Cor. 2, 9

But

But then shall you cease seeking, when the houre of enioying is once come. For then shall he be all in all [r], euen hee which alone is all-sufficient for all, and euerie man.

r 1.co.15.28

And although there, too, he must bee sought, where he is continuallie found: yet is he not there sought with labour, as in this world, but with surpassing pleasure, and loue [s].

s 1.co.13.13

What he is in this life to the godlie, it may be declared by his manifold titles: and such as haue experience (of his goodnes) knowe very well how it may be shewen.

Notwithstanding, consider what the names of God are, as I haue learned them in the schoole of experience: I wil recite a few, but the grace (of his spirit) maie put you in minde of many mo beside.

t Matth.9.15

Lo, he is a spouse [t], to such as loue; but to such as still serue him in

m Deut.6.13

feare, a dreadfull Lord [m].

Matth.4.10

Hee is a father to good children [x]; but to the obstinately wicked, a se-

x Matth.6.9

y 2.Tim 4.8

uere iudge [y].

Heb.12.23.

To the sick, he is a physician [z], and

z Mat.9.12

to the whole, wholesome foode [a].

a Iohn.6.55 56

To the ignorant a teacher [b], and

b Iohn.7.16

to the obedient, an euerlasting Sa-

uiour

uiour [c].

Hee is the waie [d] for beginners the truth, for proceeders, the life [e], for the absolute performers of his holy will.

Hee is the hope [f] of repenters, and a surpassing comforter [g] of the righteous.

He is a crowne [h] for the humble, and a punishment [i] for the proude.

In darknes hee is a light [k]; and in the night, a lanterne [l].

He giueth medicine to the diseased soules, and much wine of comfort, to the sorrowfull.

With such as stand to the battell, he standeth; with such as proceed in their iornie, he walketh; with such as feruently make haste, he runneth; with such as mount in diuine contemplation, he flieth.

Doo you praie? he is present with you. Doo you reade? he is talking with you. Doo you meditate? he is still with you.

One and the same GOD worketh in all these things, shewing himselfe to euery one, euen as he thinketh good: in his wordes ther is no fault, and his works are past finding out.

For great and vnsearchable are his

c Mat. 1. 21
d Ioh. 14. 6
e Ioh. 11 25
f Col 1. 27
1. Tim. 1. 1
g Ioh. 14. 26
h Luk. 2. 32
i Rom. 9. 33
k Ioh. 1. 8, 9
Ioh 3, 19
l Ioh 8, 12
1. Ioh. 1, 5

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m Rom. 11.33 his iudgements [m], and no man is to
take vnto him, why dooſt thou ſo?
or why dooſt thou chuſe this man ra-
n Iſai. 45.9 ther then that man [n]?

10 It is folly for a man to reaſon a-
11 Rom. 9.20 21. &c. gainſt the almightie: and all the will
of Adams children is vaine, and to no
purpoſe.

How like you theſe things, and how
doth God ſhewe vnto you?

S. He ſeemeth ſweete vnto me; nei-
ther am I offended at his works

o Pſalm 19. verſe 13 He is righteous [o], and who can
p Ioh. 8.46 rebuke him of ill dealing [p]?

He that ſo dooth, dooth ſet him-
ſelfe againſt God, and ſhall be reproo-
ued of his irreprehenſible light.

M. But what thou haſt heard, what is
it in his preſence? ſcarſe vndoubted-
ly ſo much as a ſparke, without that
which is hidden within.

Aske you what that is? I muſt ſay,
I knowe it not, it is altogether aboue
my capacity, euen as a certaine cloude
far off, whoſe beginning and end are
vnknowen.

And therefore meditate rather, &
thinke more often vpon the baſe hu-
manity of Ieſus, and doo not mount
vp too high, leaſt of his glorious ma-
ieſtie you be confounded.

But,

of the Imitation of Christ.

But forsomuch as burning loue dooth now and then forget all reuerence and feare, you are (in that respect) the more to be borne withall, if sometime, being extreamely set on fire with the loue Iesus, you dooe consider not onelie how hee cried in the manger [q], and how hee hanged vpon the crosse [r]: but also how hee raigneth now in heauen all gloriouslie [s], and ruleth all things vnder heauen most wonderfullie [t].

[q] Luk. 2, 5
[r] Ma, 27. 31 32. &c.
[s] Phil. 2 9 10
[t] Reu. 1. 5

O most louely Iesu, gladly doo I follow thee in earth: but more gladlie would I follow thee vnto heauen.

Where my treasure is, there would mine heart be also [u].

[u] Mat. 6. 21

Oh, thou art my treasure, thou which art at the righ hand of the father [x], art deerer to mee than anie creature. For my sake thou wast incarnate, for my sake thou wast eleuate.

[x] Ro. 8. 34. Heb. 1. 3

Thou diddest leaue thy selfe an example vpon earth [y]; thou keepest thy selfe for a reward in the heauens.

[y] Ioh. 13 15 1. Pet. 2. 21

Vpon thee therefore mine eyes are fixed, and after thee dooe my feete trace. To thee mine heart saith, my face seeketh thee ô Lord, I will continuallie seeke thy face [z].

[z] Psa. 27. 8

O Lord, how long wilt thou hide the sight of thy glorie? Whie hidest thou thy face [a], and takest mee for thine enemie?

a Iob. 13. 24

Thou knowest right well, my minde will be distracted hither and thither, and be diuersle beate, vntill it be fast ioyned to thee her friende in the heauens.

For the force of loue knoweth not how to be quiet [b]: but vncessantly maketh inquirie of her louer, sendeth forth messengers and doubleth praiers: neither doth it so giue ouer, because loue will altogether possesse that which it desireth.

b Sal. 5. 8. 6. 7

Therefore drawe mee [c], that I maie begin zealously to run after thee. I had neede to be drawen, and with great force to be drawen. For vnlesse thou drawe, none will come [d], none will follow: because euerie one is naturallie inclined to himselfeward.

c Sal. 8. 1. 3

d Iohn. 6. 44

But if thou once drawe, so then I doo hasten, then I run, then I waxe hot. But if thou doo not drawe, I doo neither run, nor seeke, yea scarse haue I anie desire at all to followe. If thou reach out thine hand, I doo run so much the more swiftly, as thou

of the Imitation of Christ.

thou forceably dooſt drawe.

This is the voice of my louer drawing [e], *And when I am lift vp from the earth, I will drawe all men vnto mee.* [e] Ioh.12.32

O ſweete Ieſu, drawe mee after the: and then not I onelie, but all ſhall run after thee by the ſauour of thine ointments [f]. [f] Sal.S.1.2.3

Firſt therfore drawe me after thee, then let others follow, ſeeing an example of good life.

But, that we may not waxe proud, it is good that we marke this withall, how that we began to run, not throgh our owne ſtrength, but by the ſauor of thine ointments.

This is the heauenlie drawing, without which no man can goe forward, no not ſo much as begin, as likewiſe thou diddeſt ſay [g]: *No man can come vnto mee, except my father drawe him.* [g] Ioh.6.44

So that whome the father draweth, he followeth thee, and forſaketh himſelfe.

He ſeemed to be well drawen that ſaid [h]: *Maiſter, I will follow thee, whither ſoeuer thou goeſt.* But euerie one hath not the gift to be ſo affected: neither is it a weake ſtomach that can ſo readilie followe thee vnto all things. [h] Mat.8.19 Luke.9.57

What

The fourth booke

What lett hast thou, O my soule, that thou doost not forsake all for Iesus sake? Why to vnwillingly do you depart from vaine and transitorie things? What good can these worldly things do you?

Behold, while you passe by mortall things, and visible creatures, willing to delight your selfe in them, you forget better things. While you to doe, you sever your selfe from the soueraigne good thing, and turne your minde from the true, blessed, and eternall life.

And therefore you shall continue miserable and wretched, full of griefe and vexation [i].

[i] Eccle. 2. 17

For turne your selfe on which side you will, and you shall finde matter of continuall sorrow, and much tediousnes, vntill you turne againe vnto thy creator: because he is thy peace [k], & secure quietnes.

[k] Ioh. 6. 33

But, if thou neither make staie in earthly things, nor fasten thy foote in the mire, but rather beholde and worship in the glasse of worldlie creatures, not the figure which passeth awaie [l], but him whose image and superscription it is, blessed art thou, and shalt neuer die [m].

[l] 2. Cor. 7. 31

[m] Reue. 21. 4

For

of the Imitation of Christ.

For when thou seekest arte these visible thinges not to enioy them, but beholdest them to the ende to glorifie the name of the creatour, by making to thy selfe of his best and baseſt workes a kind of ladder wherewithall thou maiest ascend, thou shalt be deliuered so from the filthy bowels of this world, and thoroughlie be coupled to thy desired ende, which is aboue all things the blessed God for euer and euer.

The fourth booke

CHAP. 13.

1. How, and when the soule and God *are vnited together.* 2. *The miserie* where God is not present.

a psa.63.8 MY *Soule cleaueth vnto thee* [a].

O my God, the true comforter, thou knowest how thou likest me well, and how I take pleasure daily to be talking with thee secretly alone.

But where may I seeke thee, if happely I do misse thee for an hour? who shall bring me vnto thee?

b Isai,46,9. Thou art God, aboue all things [b]; and I beneath all things a miserable man. Thou art in heauen [c], & I in the world. Thou art most high, but I am poore, and a begger.

c Math,6,9.

Who euer hath measured the distance betweene heauen and earth? Far asunder bee they: but farder art thou fro me, O God.

Who therefore shall vnite mee to thee? either thou must do it, or none can.

But

of the Imitation of Christ.

But if thou wilt, it may speedilie be done. And thou knowest, how of my selfe I may easilie fall: but that I do stand, and goe forward, it is of thy goodnes.

So that my soule dependeth vpon the grace of thy spirit, and of the infusion of thy speciall fauor.

If thou command, it shall be lifted vp from earth: but if thou turne away thy face, it shall be greatly troubled.

But of thy wonted fauor and mercie receiue mee; & let thy right hand guide me wonderfullie vnto thee.

Heare this, all yee people, d. giue eare all yee that dwell in the world; for it is an easie thing with God to bring it to passe, as it is written, that the rich and poore may be all one. d Psa. 49. 1.

I am poore, and lack manie things: but this my God is rich, and wanteth nothing e. e Psa. 50. 11 12

And although no great experience, yet I haue an vndoubted testimonie to proue that the soule through grace maie bee vnited to God.

My beloued is mine, saith hee f, *and I am his, he feedeth among the lilies.* f Sal. 2. 16

This

The fourth booke

This is the testimonie of the friend, and his dearling; of the bridegroome, and the spouse: and it is a verie fit, and a strong testimonie of the holie lawe.

g Ioh. 17. 21 The next is like to this g: *I will that they all may be one, as thou, O father, art in mee, and I in the.*

Behold the notable testimonies of two bookes, whereby it plainely appeareth, that the soule, through speciall grace from aboue, may bee linked familiarly vnto God.

And although it rarely come so to passe: yet is it dearely to be accompted of, and not altogether vnknowen to the louer. And againe, though verie hardlie: yet may it fall out.

The soule therefore so conioyned to God, let no man dare to separate, or to trouble.

If thou doost wonder at this maruelous vnion, wonder thou and maruell at the excellencie of his goodnes, and at the strange and singular vniting of the humane bodie (to his Godhead.)

He may doe what hee will, which
h ps 136. 4 onely doth great wonders h.

If thou lookest for merits, you shall

shall finde, it is his good pleasure to haue it so

O sweete societie with Christ, and vnder the wings of Christ!

O gratious coniunction, full of loue, and sweetnes of the holie ghost, the which is perceiued better than vttered!

These things belong vnto the soule that is estranged from all worldly matters, and is not delighted with this present life: but is carried aloft in godly meditation.

The more the louer knoweth this, the more am I ignorant. Notwithstanding, gladly would I bee in presence when the deuout soule is in such an happie case.

And then is she so, when the spouse and she is together at the noone day. But then it fareth ill with her, and that verie ill too, if it happen that Iesus bee awaie; if the perfumes of grace run not from aboue, if no pleasure she take in the holie Bible; if it bee irkesome for her to continue in prayer and godlie meditation; if the cloudes of the heart be so thick, and hurtfull cogitations doe so preuaile, that they cannot bee restrained, but do labor to ouerwhelme in a manner

all

The fourth booke

all the former good things.

O Lord God, why doest thou so? What plaie is this? O blessed Iesus, what meane you heereby?

If it were not offensiue to thine honour, I could wish to haue farther communication betweene thee, and thy beloued.

Forsomuch as shee is so greatlie desirous of thy gratious presence, whereby she may be nourished with chaste delightes, I doe much muse whie sometime you suffer her to sit so desolate. Thou passest by, and goest thy waie, as though shee had no desire vnto thee. But she is alone all
[i] Isa. 26, 9 pensiue. For thus she saith in effect[i], *With my soule haue I desired thee in the night.*

It is night with her, when thou, the true light, art not present. So that shee prayeth for thy presence, that the darkenes of sinne comprehend her not For she feeleth manifold discommodities when thy gratious visitation, is taken from her. For, had shee not suffered somewhat, she had neuer so earnestlie cryed vnto thee

Another also, which was before
[k] Psal. 63, 8 saide, cryed thus[k], *My soule cleaueth*

vnto

vnto thee.

But I thinke no trouble is or seemeth so troublesome to her, as the want of thy presence.

And no maruell, if through this want the waiward soule doo languish awaie in sorrow. For thou art verie hardlie found at any time; and being found, she reioiceth at thy returne, hoping to spend the day merilie with thee: but thinking little of thy departure, she suspecteth no aduersitie to come. But handling another matter secretly, thou often takest thy flight.

For thou departest sudainlie out of her hands, when she cannot laie hold vpon thee.

I doo praise thee: but in this how shall I praise thee? if thou hast any praise and sweetenes, why doo you seeme to forgoe it in this deed?

If thou wert not, she might be offended. But shee can take none offence at thee, who so mightily doost loue her.

If therefore anie good reason bee signified vnder that lesson, O God shew it me.

For gladly would I vnderstand the same: neither do I thinke it vnnecessary

sarie to learne though it be but little.

Because no man of himselfe can behold thy secret iudgements: but it is thy light which dooth both inlighten darke, and driue away hurtfull things.

What therefore may the cause be that sometime so secretlie you withdrawe your selfe from the soule, shee not witting thereof?

Doo you loue her, or no? If you doo loue her, then why do you leaue her, my beloued? If you loue her not, why then haue you visited her before time? Againe, if you loue her not, why doo you make returne, why knocke you at the doore, why enter you in againe? What, is it of lightnes that you doe so both go and returne? God forbid.

But so often change dooth not a little greeue her; yea much it dooth disquiet her. Yet the griefe would be the lesser, if thou wouldest say plainlie [l], *I doe goe, and will come vnto you, your heartes shall reioyce, and your ioy no man shall take from you* [m].

l Ioh. 14. 28

m Ioh. 16. 22

But now you cast out neuer a byword; onely shee thinketh vpon that speech, which she well perceiueth to be performed in her selfe, how Iesus hid

hid himself, and went out of the Temple [n]. n Ioh.8.59

A fewe things I haue against you, but my complaint doth spring out of a good roote. I humbly request to be instructed, I loue not to contend.

And therefore when occasion serueth, make answere I beseech you.

Also let the godly soule say for her selfe somewhat for her learning.

Likewise make you answere boldly when your part requireth.

O my soule, answere thou thy beloued boldly. For thy friend will patientlie heare, and meete thee with milde wordes, that you may suffer none hinderance.

For if hee bee not thy comforter, who will comfort thee? And who more fauourably will beare thine infirmitie, than hee which beareth all things, & yet is not burdened? And to whom more safely can you reueale your miserie, than to him which perfectly knoweth all things? [o] Or in whom may you put more confidēce, than in the trueth which deceiueth not [p]. o Ecclus.23. verse. 19. p Iohn.6.14

Now, if any stranger, or one that is not a friend to the spouse, shall heare these things, let him be driuen

from the doores. But if hee loue the spouse, if he bee faithfull, it denoute and spirituall, let him haue free ingresse.

If hee bee a keeper of good conscience, a louer of vertue and discipline; if hee be pure in heart q, and
q Matt. 5. 3 cleere in iudgement; if humble in himselfe, and good towards others; if he can neither wickedlie carpe at, vainly extoll, rashlie reprooue, impudently maintaine, nor proudlie commend things; but contrariwise, if he haue learned both the things which he conceiueth not, to reuerence, and also rightly to interpret obscure and mysticall matters, let him haue entrance, and heare the communication For the affection of the hart through the sound of words ought to be noted, rather than the qualitie of voyces.

And therefore tell me ô soule, how dost thou feele thy selfe, wanting now the grace of thy beloued? I for my part do see that hardly I can take it well, if he keepe himselfe long away: and I conceiue the like of you.

If you thinke good, let vs sit heere together, and confer wee hereof to our comfort.

Chap

CHAP. 14.

1. A lamentation of the soule for the want of grace.

MIne heart breaketh for desire [a]. a Psa.119.20
What is it thou saist? Why sayest thou, Zion, the Lord hath forsaken me?

Feare not daughter Syon, thou loving and religious soule: lo thy king, and welbeloued friend commeth to thee.

Arise, stand vp, and behold the ioy which commeth toward thee from thy God.

S. I haue sought, saith the soule, & haue not found [b], I haue called, and he hath not answered, and therefore I doe breake for thought. b Sal.S.3.2

M. Then said I, this is the voice of the Turtle hauing lost her mate.

It is not now with you as it was yesterday, and tarewhile, when you sang the songs of myrth.

S. The morning is past, night commeth, and the spouse resteth himselfe at noone tide: yet may I not

come nigh him.

M. Your words are sorrowfull, and your eies shed teares. O soule, thou art grieued, and hast neede of comfort. But speake, whence commeth your griefe?

S. I am not troubled either for gold or siluer, or any worldely matter, neither for lucre, nor for hurt, neither for iniurie, nor for pouertie, for I am now dead, and crucified to the world.

M. If I bee not deceiued, long since you renounced the world. But whether in all things perfectlie you haue denied the same, and are come euen vnto a verie hatred of your selfe, I would faine know.

S. Verie few haue that gift, and it is especially looked for at your hands.

M. Why therefore are you so pensiue? What haue you forgone? If it be for your friend his sake, I must needs confesse you doe well to be sad: neither should you take delight in anie thing, vntill he returne, and visit you againe.

But in the meane while, how doe you susteine your selfe vpon the beloued, O sweete soule?

And sure I am hee is not alway present

preſent at a wiſh. Therefore while he is ablent, what comfort haue you, wherein do you take delight?

Tell me your ſecrets, be they neuer ſo grieuous.

That you beare the abſence of Christ heauilie, no man doubteth, but he only that loueth not.

Now you are ſad, I take it, not for this worlde, but for the ſpouſe Christ. And I knowe full well that when hee ſhall returne, you will bee merrie againe: becauſe hee will not alwaies forget you. For he hath ſaid [e], *I will not leaue you comfortleſſe, but I will come to you.* e Ioh. 14. 18.

Therfore your words are not vain, beeing vttered with ſuch griefe, but they declare a louing hart, and ſtrike the cold affection, which is not inflamed with the loue of Christ.

For your voice, is the voice of a Turtle, not the crying of a murmurer. And therefore I truſt, you ſhall finde him, whoſe loſſe you ſo lament.

Notwithſtanding I demand, What ſay you of him, whoſe abſence you do ſo bewaile? Is he good, or no?

S. Doubtleſſe hee is good, and ſingularlie good too [d], righteous, and d Mat. 19. 17

faithfull, in him there is no wicked-
e Iob. 34. 10 nes, neither can be.

M. Why therefore lament you for
f 1. Pet. 2. 22 the good, in whom is no deceipt?

S. I weep not for the good, in respect that hee is good: but I lament mine owne miserable condition, because I haue lost a good and a faithfull friend.

I, euen I haue deserued this: but alas, alas that I kept not his fauor!

By the lack, I haue now learned what I haue lost. And the absence of a friend sheweth, what his presence did good.

I was merry and iocund with him: but I did no whit consider of his speedy departure.

He came skipping vpon the mountaines, hee was ioyfull and iocund in the porches of mine house. And straightway I vnlocked the doores of the flesh, and let in the beloued vnto me. I did sit, and rested within vnder his shadowe from the haile & raine. And it did mee much good to haue his company.

Whie should I not reioice? He is my ioie, and the comfort of mine heart.

Ab, what had I? And what then did

did I possesse?

I am not able to vtter, how wel I prospered then; neither is it conuenient that I should. I coulde not desire more then I had, he beeing present whom alone I loued.

Oh, how did I loue, when I despised both my selfe, and all things beside!

I had either little or no care at all of any thing that might delight me; for I was rauished with loue of him, and whatsoeuer was not my beloued I loathed as altogether vnsauorie. But he being taken awaie, I am in a manner cleane out of heart.

For my soule depended vpon his grace, because I had none other comfort besides him, whose absence I do thus lament. He did content me, and was sufficient to the making of true mirth indeed.

As I would, so was he; and whatsoeuer he enioyned me, I tooke it in good part, and I consecrated my self wholie and frankelie to his will. So that there was a good agreement, & great quietnes between vs.

No man durst be so bold as to interrupt our silence, when hee had commanded so through my mouth.

L. I charge you, ô daughters of Ie-
g Sal. S. 2.7 rusalem g, by the Roes, and by the Hindes of the fielde, that yee stir not vp, nor waken my Loue, vntill she please.

S. Now therfore note, if you be able to conceiue my woordes, what great cause I haue to lament the absence of my friende, by whose presence I began to bee so rich with all good things.

M. Heereunto I answered, I know well what you say: by often experience I haue prooued so much as you speake.

But let vs comfort our selues in this, that the dispensation of his wil is the increase of our zeale, and deuotion.

And nowe I haue receiued with thankefulnes that which you haue vttered: notwithstanding, I woulde more thronghlie haue them beaten into mine head. For they which be hard of conceiuing, are often to be told of a matter.

Chap. 15.

1. Touching the fruit of friendship.
2. The benefits of Christ vpon man, 3. The true felicitie and ioy of the soule.
4. The affinity betweene Christ and the soule of man.

PRaised bee GOD which hath not put backe my praier fro me [a]. Therefore I am now againe zealously to enquire, if your friend at any time left you without inward comfort. [a] psal. 66. 20

What meane you? What muse you heere about? How also may he bee reconciled and reclamed?

Of all friendship, I beseech you, ô deare and beloued soule to Christ, conceale none of these things which I am to demaund of you.

You may so doo me a pleasure, in opening to me your godlie cogitations.

By your talke, I shall bee able to measure the waight of my griefe, whether iustly or without cause I was pensiue.

For

The fourth booke

For I haue ſeene you ſometime merrie, and ſomtime ſad, and by and by glad againe, and by your I did ſomewhat conſider of my ſelfe.

But I ſuppoſe the chiefeſt cauſe of this your alteration is, that returning and departure of the beloued. The which hath made mee, perceiuing how you haue run ouer many matters, for mine inſtruction to report vnto you.

S. According to your deſire, I will bend my ſelfe ſomewhat to vnfolde the things which I feele within me, both when I am with my friend, and alſo when I am alone, looking for him whom I ſo do loue.

This firſt vnderſtand, I reape not ſo much ioy and pleaſure by his preſence, but I find as much ſorrow and bitternes through his abſence.

But why it pleaſeth him ſo to come and go, rather I had he ſhould declare than I.

But you ſhall heare it when I haue finiſhed the wordes of my ſong, becauſe in the ende wee will bring him in vnto vs, and ſitting among vs, hee ſhal teach vs his order, the which hee vſeth to ſhow vnto ſuch as deſire his preſence.

In

In the mean while giue attentiue eare vnto mee, and be not offended at mine homely speech.

For wee are now come together to stirre vp our hearts, and either to weepe together, or through loue to reioyce together.

For woe vnto him that is alone, b Eccles. 4. verse, 10 because when he falleth into some sorrow, or tentation, there is not a second to lift him vp. And if two be together, they will comfort one the other, while one being glad, the other ministreth ioy; or if he refuse to be comforted, he shall bee pitied forthwith, and griefe will be taken for his griefe: and so it will fall out that either they will both be glad, or both sad together. And although some sorrowe doo yet still continue for some aduersitie, or matter of sorrow: yet the more patiently they beare it, because their harts be so linked, that nothing can change or alter their minds.

Now, who seeing this faithful concord of mindes, but must needes breake into these wordes, and say, c *Behold how good, & how comly a thing it is, brethren to dwell euen together!* c psal. 133. 1.

And therefore I can the more boldly

boldly tell you what I think, because I dread no deceipt, or subtiltie in you.

Lo, this all sweete spouse, and best beloued friend, our Lord Iesus Christ, the louer of holie soules [d], euen of pure loue, not able otherwise to doo, allured mee vnto him; and when I was not, he gaue me life: wisedo me and power to beholde this common light.

[d] Wis.11, 23

[e] Act.17, 21

Hee gaue mee grace to bee borne anewe by Baptisme, and adorned me with the roabe of his pretious merits.

Ouer and besides, when afterward I had foully bespotted my selfe with sinne, and was far vnfit to loue him, he cast not his eye vpon my filthines, but vpon the side of his mercies.

For when as yet I wandred out of the way, he reclamed me of his goodnes [f], not suffering mee to perish in this wicked world.

[f] Rom.8. 30

Moreouer, hee hath prouided mee a place to rest in so long as I liue in this mortall bodie.

Notwithstanding, this dwelling vnder the shadowe of the beloued, is not the true rest, nor the rest which shall for euer continue: but that is the

the true rest, which wee shall feele after the labors of this present life[g]. [g] Reue. 21.4

Yet for the soule to perceiue her selfe to bee vnburdened of worldlie cares, and there to rest where shee may the more fullie serue her beloued, and attend vpon him in the secret chamber of silence, it is a kind of comfort.

Furthermore, my friend hath not left, but assisted mee in my diuers troubles, and sorest tentations.

Also, he hath both instructed mee oftentimes with profitable sermons, and confirmed me in his word.

And as young plants are woont to be watered with showers: so he hath watered mee with inwarde comfort, that the vertue newlie implanted within me may not wither.

L. And he said to me, If thou hast a lust vnto mee, and wilt hearken vnto me, thou shalt enioy good thinges; if thou wilt doo, whatsoeuer I command thee, thou art a friend of mine[h]. [h] Ioh. 15.14

If thou wilt choose me, and loue me aboue all things, all things that you aske, my father will giue you: but if you forgoe me, then shalt thou come to destruction, for my wrath shall bee incensed against thee; if thou

thou seeke after another, he shall not please thee long, but thou wilt loath and abhor him. Because I am the sal-
1 Iohn. 4 6 uation, and the life of the soule.
Iohn. 17. 25 S. So I turned mee vnto him which had doon me good, & expelling from out my selfe the dust of earthlie affections, I decreed in mine hart from thenceforth to seruе him only: because I found nothing better than him, nor could imagine no couenant more profitable.

Let others iet, and seeke what friendship they will elsewhere, I am thoroughlie perswaded this is the true man of the soule, for whose sake mee thinkes I could gladlie forsake this world, to enioy his loue euerlastingly.

And therefore I stucke vnto him, for he liked me still; neither could I find a better friend.

For my soule alwaie hath exceedingly desired such a one, as is the greatest for power, the best for goodnes, the woorthiest for dignitie, and the most happy for all good things.

And because he is verie curteous, hee gaue me comfortable wordes, warily foreseeing that they should neither terrifie, nor breake mee through

through ouer-much roughnesse, but rather enioine and teach mee that which should bee both light, and sweete to be borne, that so my yong affection might the better be drawn on, and the more forceably addicted to the freend beloued, and shrink not backe.

M. She shall the better, said he, bee instructed, and profit, if not by force, but through gentlenes she be prouoked forward. She will the more easily receiue my yoake, rather by loue with rewards, than by feare with punishment. And if she neede impulsion, let it wisely bevsed, that violence do not ouerthrow her.

For he knew right well what was best for a young plant, and what profit this his kindnes would bring vnto mee, especially at the time of tryall, when I should easily call into my remembrance the good things which at the first he did vnto my soule, and thereby take courage to proceede in the battell.

Hee would not straight way open vnto me, what and how much trouble I was to endure in his seruice; but sometime hee tempered aduersitie with prosperity, well considering my weake-

weakenes at the first vntil through experience I had gotten strength to endure affliction

After all this he caried mee about, enstructed, and boare mee vpon his shoulders.

Hee conducted mee ouer the holie Scripture, & with the heate of his holy Spirit he armed me against the wicked tentations of Sathan.

Moreouer, he placed before mine eyes exãples of all the virtues, namely, the holy Patriarches, and Prophets, besides the glorious lights of the new Testament.

Euen as a Mother teacheth her little childe, so he instructed me, breaking spirituall shales, and putting the kernels into my iawes, because they were swete to be eaten.

Search if you can what they signifie, and where such may be found.

Open the apostolicall booke, read aduisedlie, and see if you are able to comprehend so great mysteries.

Peruse the Prophet Isaiah; looke into the Gospell, the light of all lights, and marke if they doe not yeelde most pleasant notes of themselues.

In them whatsoeuer you finde which

which is obscure, and hard to bee vnderstood, that is a nut in a shell

But if you heare it expounded, and vnderstand that which afore you did not, then broken is the shell, and the sweetnes of the nut doth sauour in the heart. And so are wee to iudge of other darke sentences. Whereby you may beholde so many nuts, as you see hidden sentences.

And how thinke you, did hee beare mee on his shoulders? That hee did so often as he beheld mine infirmitie, and yet neither cast mee off, nor despised me, but patiently and mercifully did beare with me [k].

k 2. Pet. 3. 9.

Againe, hee did beare mee on his shoulders, when hee made other men to beare with mine infirmities, and whatsoeuer was blame worthy within mee.

Besides, yet more louingly hee did beare me on his shoulders, when hee bare his crosse vnto the place, called the place of dead mens sculs [l], where hee was crucified. For then was I a more heauie burthen vnto him, than the crosse was: And my sinnes were more grieuous to his bones [m], than this wood of the crosse to his backe. Because for my sake that crosse was carried,

l Ioh. 19. 17. 18.

m 1. pet. 2. 24

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n Isa 53.5.6 carried [n], not for his owne sake.

Oh, how is he aboue all things to be loued, and to be worshipped, by whose grace and merits I am thus

o Luke. 15.4 5.&c. both found out [o], and redeemed [p].

p Gal. 3.13 And therefore he shall be as deere to me, as the childe is to his mother.

But well I know, that I am far vnmeete to loue him, Notwithstanding my boldnes come h from his goodnes. Neither could I doe otherwise but run vnto his most friendly embracements, when he shewed himself so kinde vnto me.

I do well remember what the Prophet Dauid in a certaine place doth

q 1.Sam. 18 verse. 18 say [q].

What am I? and what is my life, or the familie of my father in Israel, that I should be sonne in law to the King?

But our affinitie togither is much more excellent, than this of Dauid and Saul. Because ours is a pure and sincere kinred, not with flesh and blood, but betweene God himselfe, betweene faith vnuiolated, and a good conscience.

Of this, did that Disciple whome

r 1.Iohn.4.4 Iesus loued, speake on this wise [r]:

Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

For

For God is loue ſ, and loue bring- ſ 1. Ioh. 4. 16
geth forth this kinred.

Therfore ſith Dauid thought him ſelfe far vnmeete to be ſonne in lawe vnto an earthly King: much more abaſhed ought I to be, to enter into alliance with the King of all Kings, that vouchſafeth to allure mee, vile wretch, into his friendſhip.

So that he hath delt with me, not according to my deſerts, but euen as it ſeemed good in his merciſull eies.

Oh bleſſed, and happie art thou, ſoule, nowe thou art faſt bound with the chaine of the heauenly loue!

Oh how noble, and free art thou, ſeeing thou art priuie euen to the ſighings of ſo holie copulation!

But ſeeing I haue ſpent many words about the beloued, and yet haue not anſwered fully vnto your demaund, let vs now begin afreſh, and god grant that our ſpeech may be both to our comfort and profit.

CHAP. 16.

1. The more wee loue Christ, the more wee may. 2. Tentation and when. 3. Happinesse of the life to come. 4. How to beare affliction.

BEhold, *as the eies of seruants looke vnto the hãds of their maisters: and as the eies of a maiden vnto the hand of her mistris* [a], so mine eies are fixed continually vpon my friend.

a Ps. 123. 2.

Since first I began to loue him, I haue had a great desire to continue with him. And this mine intent liked him well, and hee allowed the same, saying [b]:

b Iohn. 15. 5 *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*

But that the truth, the strength, and the puritie of my loue might appeare, it was behouefull that I should bee tempted. And so I could not bee, vnlesse he both suffered the same, and hid himselfe.

And, because tentation serueth both for the purging of the inner man [c], and for the fruitfull bringing

c Ps. 119. 73.

forth

forth of vertue; and also for the better perceiuing the spirituall graces of God, I was tried, and exercised therewithall.

How stronglie, and how often hee slang me this waie and that waie, my God and Lord, which knoweth al secrets [d], and is a witnesse to euerie priuie cogitation of the heart [e], and still seeth mee, and perceiueth how I am nothing else but a fraile creature [f], euen he knoweth right well.

d Eccl. 23. verse 19
e Act. 15.8
f Psa. 102.11

If therefore he had not assisted me, when I was extreamly afflicted, doubtles I had perished [g], beeing readie to fall into the pit of desperation. But hee, whose manner is to comfort the troubled in spirit [h], tooke mercy vpon me.

g Psa. 119.92
h Psa. 34.18

For, if God helped & assisted not, who were able to beare so manifold tentations!

And therefore it was of his great mercie that I stoode before the face of such troublesome tempests: and also it is of the same his goodnes, that still I do stand and fall not.

But heereof I may not vainelie boast, so long as I liue in this mortall bodie.

For though I see the element is now

now cleere, yet doe I not thinke that long it will continue quiet. For the winde sodainly will arise, & that happelie when we thinke least thereof.

So that by so much I perceiue I doe neede my friend his assistance, by how much I perceiue I do lie open on all sides to troubles.

We shall be quiet no where but in
Reue. 21.4. heauen!, where my friend doth feed his elect with ioy and exultation.

But when there? Whan can I speak thereof? Scarse can I thinke any thing thereof, and that not euidentlie enough; and enter thereinto I may not.

Oh that he would come, and set mee in that all glorious, quiet, and fruitfull pasture of his saints, where neither Sathan is, nor danger to be feared!

As yet I toile in the sea, and whether I shall attaine vnto the port of saluation by reason of my troubles arising through so many contrarie windes, I am vtterly ignorant.

So that I am altogether out of quiet. Notwithstanding, it is a shield and comfort vnto mee, that I stil do behold the light of faith; that with-

all

all submission I seeke the fauour of my beloued; that I beare toward him a constant hope; that I will, not bee separated from his loue [k]; and that I doo rest vpon his prouidence, and vnsearchable goodnes, more than vpon my selfe. [k] Rom. 8. 35

And therfore, though too too often I doo stagger, yea and fall too sometime into sinne: yet am I not to despaire, but rather continuallie to flie vnto him and to crie,

O Lord my GOD, haue mercie vpon mee, and suffer mee not to perish through my manifold tentations, but assist me faithfully, that valiantly I may resist, and ouercome.

Reach out thy right hand vnto the worke of thine owne hands [l], oh thou which triest mee by Satan, and setteste mee oftentimes on thy left hand. [l] Iob 14. 15 Psalm. 95. 7

And if any such tentation shall come, as will stay mee from crying vnto the Lord, then will I sigh from the bottom of mine heart. For he knoweth euen the verie secrets of the hart [m], and is priuie to the groanings of the spirit [n]. It is not his will that any one euen of the least should [m] Psal. 7. 9 [n] Rom. 8. 26 27

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°Ma.18.14 perish °.

Oh, how great was his goodnes to mee-ward, in that it pleased him to be present with me in my trouble, when I did not know, nor could mark so much! For often he preserued me from being vtterlie giuen ouer vnto my wicked affections.

Through his secret iudgment it came to passe now and then, that I fel, & was foiled euē in trifles, that I might

ᵖPs.119.73 not waxe proude ᵖ, and be high minded for great things, but learn throgh humiliation, how I was nothing euen then when I seemed to stand vpright,

ᵍ1.cor.4.7 and to flourish ᵍ.

And therefore I wish you not ouer-rashlie, or quickely to commend mee, though I seeme to prosper in your sight, but reserue all praise vntill the good day of my death, yea rather praise the Lord, and not me.

Giue the glorie vnto GOD on

ʳLu. 2.14 high ʳ, which assisted mee in all my tentations.

For hee deliuered mee of his mercie manie a time, when I was taken of mine enemies.

Also, when they came as a whirlewinde to destroie mee, hee sent out

Psal.18.14 his arrowes, and scattered them ˢ,

and

and he encreased lightnings and appalled them, so that they left me for a time. Because hee would not haue mee to bee without that, which from time to time he hath acquainted his saincts withall [t].

So that I had afterward a little quietnes, and peace, by the meanes of my friend.

Whereupon, I did betake mee not vnto bodilie, or worldlie, but vnto spirituall ease, beholding the earth a far off, and casting my thoughts vpon the secrets of heauen [u].

I gaue diligence to see what manner of person I am, and how I might best please him, which had reuealed vnto me so manie tokens of loue, far beyond all deserts of mine.

And so much as in mee laie, I wished continuallie for this ioyfull peace, the better to cleaue vnto him, and to serue him the more freelie.

But manie times the soule hath not her desire. But sometime it is graunted, sometime vpon good consideration it is differred.

For who would not wish still to rest vnder the shade of the beloued, if it might bee graunted him, and if time and place were conuenient?

t Act. 14. 22 Ps. 34. 19

u Col. 3. 1 2.

But now my friend worketh with me againe.

I feele not affliction alway, neither yet doo I enioy continuall reſt, but by an euening and morning a day is made.

For this mortall life is ſpent in comming and going both through
* Act.14.22. proſperitie and aduerſitie *.

This was in the minde of that ſaint
y Iob.7.18 which ſaid y.

Thou dooſt viſit him in the morning, and trieſt him euerie moment.

Notwithſtanding, it ſeemeth a kinde of reſt, if the enemie doo neither too often, nor too importunatelie aſſaile.

And therefore when it ſhall bee granted mee euen a little to reſt my ſelfe ſweetely in my beloued, I will take it in good part, and reioyce. I will reioyce I ſay, yea and alwaie reioice for that grace of God.

Moreouer, it maketh me bold to pray vnto him in all my neceſſities, becauſe he hath freely preuented me ſo oftentimes with his mercifull viſitation.

For when hee doth but approach, minding to keepe holie day with mee, euen then ſuddainlie there ſhi-

neth

neth a light ouer mine heart, which forthwith drieth out the cloudes of all wicked cogitations, whereby I do enioye the long desired cleerenes of God his light.

Because no vncleane, nor filthie thing can stand where hee entreth in [z], for hee loueth puritie [a], and is the ingraffer of the same; so that of necessitie all satanicall illusion, together with the pomps of this worlde, must be packing.

[z] Reue. 21.27
[a] Matth. 5.8

Therefore my passions and tentations which I did endure being suppressed, I began both the more euidentlie to knowe, and the more earnestlie to loue, and the more hartilie to praise him, for vouchsafing at the length to beate back the damned crew of the wicked from assailing me.

For they doe disturbe my peace, & sin doth so shut vp my mouth, that I am ashamed to speake vnto my welbeloued.

But in vaine do they bend themselues against his power and wisedome, because euen in a moment hee can slide downe into mine heart, and poure in secretlie good motions, that I may both contemne, and vtterlie

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neglect all their priuie whisperings.

O my faithfull, and all happie freend, take mee so vnto thee, whensoeuer thou shalt perceiue mine affections to bee either pressed downe at anie time with the waight of sin, or to be held with vnnecessarie busines, that I may not wander farre astray from thee after the swarme of wicked cogitations, and so ouerhastilie be depriued of thy grace, without which I shall not be able to enioy thy friendship.

For thou art my Lord, and my God [b], which by thy word dost both heale, and sanctifie; which holdest my soule in life [c], and sufferest not my feete to slip, but deliuerest me from the euill daie, and from the snares of death.

[b] Mat. 4. 10.

[c] Psal. 66. 9.

Oh, how manie haue bin cast off, & vtterlie perished, that haue bin much more innocent than I am!

And therefore my soule, praise thou the Lord, and all that is within mee blesse his holie Name [d].

[d] Psa. 103. 1, 2.

My soule, I say, praise thou the Lord, and forget not all his benefits.

It is all too little, and far vnsufficient whatsoeuer thou shalt, either thinke, or speake, or promise to his praise.

praise. For hee exceedeth all praise, and is much sweeter than anie musick.

Wherefore my soule cleaueth to thee alone, and loueth thee aboue all other gifts, notwithstanding it be exceedingly beawtifull and sweete which of meere good will thou hast sent vnto me.

For thou alone art the spouse [e]: as for all things else they are gifts, and arguments of loue. e Mat. 9. 15

In steede of thee I will not loue them; neither will I beleeue that any thing, or all things in the world can suffice mee, if I haue not thee: for in so dooing, I may perchance forgo thee with them too.

Thou giuest me leaue to vse many things for thy sake; but I may not enioy so much as one thing in thy steed [f]. f Exod. 20.3

And therefore, O Christ my sweet spouse, I haue preferred thee afore all other things, and my care hath bin aboue all things to loue thee.

Wherefore, graunt that blessedlie I may enioie thee, and in that vnion euerlastinglie to triumph in happines together with thee.

But how farre am I come? I haue

lengthened my speech more than perhaps you would. But pardon me, good freend. For I haue bin caried aloft through the loue of mine especiall, and onely freend; and would to God it would please him still to lift vp both me and you too, in contemplation!

Let him prouide an heauenlie ascension, but let vs not keepe a base going downe.

M. Aske you me, whether I am forsaken at anie time of my beloued?

S. Yea, I say so.

M. But how do you behaue your self in trouble?

S. I take all things as patientlie as I can, expecting his comming.

Naturallie I am grieued: but as touching my spirit, I haue inward patience; that my greefe proue not incurable. For I forget not, how he that loueth, liueth in paine.

g Rom. 1, 17. I liue by faith g; I beleeue the holie Scriptures; I giue credit to the words of comfort. And although I endure affliction: yet I doubt not, neither indeede ought I to doubt, but that God (when it pleaseth him) can send me ease.

For true, and to bee credited are those

those woordes which are declared. Because the verie saincts themselues haue beene exercised in manie, and proued in like things [h].

Nature continually doth wish for quietnes, and seeketh to be comforted in something: but the spirit notwithstanding is readie to sustaine whatsoeuer the will of God is I should endure [i].

If therefore I shall be lesse zelous, and lesse willing to doe good, my punishment shall be the more grieuous. *Though he slaie me*, saith the wiseman [k], *yet will I trust in him.*

If I loue virtues, patience is a great virtue: therefore let patience euermore bee retained For the more praise we purchase, the more paines we take in bringing things to passe.

And that our virtue may bee proued, and made the more glorious, we are commonlie exercised by contrary euents.

Therefore whensoeuer any such triall shal happen, be not out of heart, neither fall downe; but receiue thou patience, and extoll the righteousnes of God. The Lord is not so hard and pitileſse, that he can suffer you to abide long vncomforted.

h Heb. 11. 4 5.6.&c.

i Mar. 14. 38

k Iob. 13. 15

Onelie haue a care, that you neither lament immoderatelie, nor yet murmur against the righteous and iust God, becauſe you are forſaken[l], leaſt the wicked ſpirit dooe ſend vnto you more greeuous tentations of your faith, whereby being ouerfearefull, you ſhall extreamelie bee afflicted.

[l] 1. Cor. 10. verſe 10

Wherefore beare a little, and ſuppreſſe your ſorrowe, although the griefe both of your heart and bodie be neuer ſo great.

Abide conſtant in that good purpoſe, which at the firſt you intended to keepe. For it is good, eſpeciallie at ſuch an extreamity, to caſt all confidence vpon the beloued.

Looke thou patiently for God his heauenly comfort, ſo ſhall you ſpeedilie perceiue a ſpeciall fauor, & ſight of God.

Lo, you haue a faithfull witneſſe, ſaying[m], *I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined vnto me, and heard my crie.*

[m] pſa. 40, 1

And that in your neede you maye finde the like fauour, I dooe wiſh you both earneſtly to pray your ſelfe, and deſire others to praie for you alſo, and ſo commit your ſelfe wholie

to his will and ordinance, that hee may deale with you euen as it ſhall pleaſe him; and ſaie to him with a good conſcience:

In thine hands are my woorks, thou knoweſt how it goeth with me; thou knoweſt what I ſuffer; and now, if it be thy will, I ſhall ſpeedily be comforted.

Notwithſtanding, let that be doon which ſeemeth right, & good in thine eies, and haue mercie on me, a deſolate, and miſerable wretch, pitiouſlie complaining vnto thee.

If therefore thou continue in patience and long-ſuffering, and for a little trouble, ſwarue not from the faith and loue in Ieſus Chriſt, aſſure your ſelfe the brightnes of God his fauor will returne, and illuminate thee moſt glorioſlie with his beames of ſpirituall comfort. And ſo the beloued at his returne ſhall bee more deere vnto thee, than if he had neuer bin abſent.

For the ſentence of God his diſpleaſure is not paſt calling back; neither is he ſo offended, that he may not be reconciled againe.

Doubtleſſe hee will ſpeedily, and eaſilie be at one with thee, if thou

giue

giue diligence, and promise afterward both to be more carefull that you sin not, & earnest to leade a virtuous life.

If thou wilt yeeld to these wholesome admonitions, doubt you not, thy beloued will be with you as afore, and at his presence you will receiue much comfort, saying [n]:

[n] Psa. 31. 19 *How great is thy goodnes, which thou hast laid vp for them that feare thee! which thou hast doon for them which trust in thee, vnder the shadow of thy wings thou wilt protect them!*

O Zion, thou shalt be renued, & see thy King which is to raigne in thee.

Thy beloued is the King of power [•], whose hinder partes are in the palenes of gold, but his head is pure gold.

[•] Dan. 2. 37

Thus much maie suffice to be said for your comfort.

As for other thinges concerning the change of the beloued, namelie, howe hee appeareth sometime, and sometime runneth too and fro, in the next discourse you shall receiue, and heare them euen from his owne mouth.

of the Imitation of Christ.

CHAP.17.

1. The maiestie, and omnipotencie of *God.2. How, and why the Lord afflicteth* his children.

MAruelous are thy woorks, and my soule knoweth it right wel[a] How is it ô my beloued, that I am thus dealt withall? Why hast thou forsaken me? Answere, I beseech thee. a ps.139.14

Thou didst leaue me, and wentest, and camest againe. And heerein thou diddest wel. For hadst thou not made a speedie returne, I had fainted welnigh: but thou tookest compassiõ vpon me, being priuie to all my secrets.

For through your departure I was verie sad: and now for your returne I am glad againe.

Notwithstanding for my learning sake, tell, what good meaning had you therein? What auaileth it you so to leaue, and afflict me?

Take you pleasure in hearing? *Tary with vs, for it is towards night*[b]. b Lu.24.29

O come, and sit among vs; for lo, I and

and another disciple are very desirous to heare you speake, and we heartilie praie you to instruct vs.

Speake boldly what it shall please you, and if you think good, turne your speech vnto mee. I doo heare none with such pleasure as I doo you. And whosoeuer else dooth speake, his speech is gratefull, & well listened vnto of me, for your sake that speake within him.

And therefore your speech shall bee to me more sweete, than either the honie, or the honie combe: For they passe in sweetenesse all other woordes.

Let now your voice sound in mine eares.

So then the voice of the beloued thundered, and said:

L. I am the Lord which speake righteousnes [c]; And who is like mee in counsell and wisedome?

[c] Esa. 45. 19

Who made the sea, and the drie land? I, the Lord, forming the light, and creating the darknes [a].

[a] Esai 45 7. 8

Who hath entred into the sea, and brought forth waters out of the deepe? Euen I, the Lord, which search the hearts and the reines [c].

[c] psal. 7. 9

Who hath knowen all things past, and

and is priuie vnto the things to come? Euen I, the Lord, which haue doon all thinges in measure, number, and weight [f].

f Wis. 11.17

I am the creator both of heauen and earth [g]; the ruler of this worlde [h]; the knower of hidden thinges [i]; the reuealer of secrets [k]; the possessor of the whole world [l], and the beholder of the causes of all particulars.

g Esa. 42.5
h 1. Ti. 1.17
i Reu 3.15
Eccle. 42.20
k Mat. 10.26
l psa. 50.12

I am God, and change not [m], who haue continuallie with me the causes of all changes in the world.

m Mal. 3.6

I am God the almightie [n], whose power is invincible [o]; I am God the most high [p], whose highnesse can not bee attained [q]; I am God, the most righteous [r], whose being can not be conceiued [s].

n Gen. 35.11
Reuel. 4.8
Rene. 11.17
o Rom. 9, 19
p Esa. 14.14
q Psa. 139.7 8. &c.
r Mat. 19.17
s Iob. 11.7.8 &c.

I am for my presence euery-where [t], and yet no where to be seene [u].

t psa. 139.7.8 9
u Iob. 23, 8, 9

I am the most spirituall, and farthest from the senses of man [x].

x Iohn, 1, 18

I beare all things, yet neuer burdened [y], and I fill and rule each place, and yet vnstretched.

y Heb. 1.3

I behold both things past, & things to come alike, as though they were present [z].

z Wis. 8.8

I surpasse all creatures both spirituall

Eccle. 42.19

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a psa.35.10 tuall, and corporall [a].

I am diuerslie to be named: yet no thought is able to conceiue mee as I am.

I shewe my selfe suddenly, and foorth-with when one would little thinke, I am gone againe.

b 1.Tim.6.16 I am indeed the inuisible God [b], which after a thousand waies declare my presence to my friends

And thus I spake vnto the louing soule:

I will hide my face for a little season, I will forsake her for a while, to see if her loue be pure, and vnfained.

It is a great matter to loue vnfainedly. For that is to loue mee neither for her owne sake, nor for any temporall commoditie, or spirituall comfort; but to loue mee, and me

c Mat.4.10 only [c], and that for mine owne sake, and that to the end, and that in hope of nothing at mine hands.

It is not in euerie one thus to loue mee; but this prerogatiue of pure louing, is properly to the perfect soule.

But she that is yet vnperfect, hath great neede often to be prooued, and exercised, that shee may know both how

how much she loueth mee, and howe greatlie she despiseth her selfe.

For you said in your hart: Truly I doe loue (Christ) yea, and often you repeate the same thing, I loue him indeede.

But I credit not words, or thoughts onely. For I will make due tryall of that loue.

When I am present, and speake faire; when I either put, or encrease good motions in the minde; when I graunt prosperitie most commonly or pleasure, then can you say with all deuoutnes, *O my beloued, I doe loue you.* And you say well. For I am greatlie to be loued, and you are at no time either to thinke, or speake otherwise than freendlie, and honourably of mee.

But for prosperitie, and good turnes only to loue, and to cõmend me, what great thing is it? Because euen sinners doe the same. For when they haue receiued what naughtilie they craued, they oftentimes blesse mee for the same. But praise is not seemely in the mouth of the sinner [d]. d Eccius. 15. 9

He therefore which either for some profit, or comfort receiued, dooth loue mee, dooth no more than a co-

uetous

The fourth booke

uetous man dooth. But exceede him, I saie, exceede him, & proceede vnto greater righteousnes.

Be ashamed still to be weake and tender; learne to eate mans meate, bee not still fed with the milke of children.

Attaine thou to the companie of the stoute Dauids, that can hold both speare, and sword, and shield.

Take vp the crosse, and followe
e Luk.9.23 mee e.

Make hast to bee in the number of them, which haue learned to beare diuers afflictions, and much banishment for my name sake. You are too much giuen vnto ease.

I purpose to trie you, and to turne vnto the other side, that you may knowe what you can suffer, least you seeme ouer innocent and holie in your owne conceipt.

Tribulation, and anger, and mine heauie displeasure, together with sore tentations of wicked spirits, shall come vpon you. Some vniustlie shall spoyle you of your goodes; others shall take no compassion vpon you; others shall defame; others shall resiste; others shall ouercharge; others shall carrie you perforce whither

ther you would not goe; some outwardlie, others inwardlie, shall trouble you. Some shall be aduanced vnto hie degree, and honour, but you shall be left vnto reproches, and endure seruile paines. In all these, yea and in greater things you shall bee prooued, whether you are a valiant soldier of mine, or no.

I will depart, and not giue ouer, vntill I haue made sufficient triall, whether you blesse me to my face.

Now if I finde, that from the hart vnfainedlie you doe loue mee, and continuallie doe praise my name, then is it meete that from thenceforth I call you Spouse, and that you shall haue a secret chamber with mee.

But if I perceiue that you cannot beare my correction, but will iudge my punishment to be ouer-sharp, and still bewaile mine absence, wishing for mee with hartie and earnest desire, I will sende you my staffe, that you may arise thereby, and afterward my selfe will come, and restore you againe vnto my woonted fauor. For it is not my will that you should vtterlie faint: becausse him that loueth me, I will loue to the ende f. f Iohn. 13. 1

And

And although your loue be not so perfect as could be wished; yet I will not despise you, but prouide that you may growe on in louing. For my care is that you doe well; and therefore mistrust me not.

I know what you can endure: which maketh me to temper my course, that you bee not tempted aboue your strength, and so faint.

And if I staie, in your opinion, some-what too long, looke for mee vntill the daie of my visitation. For comming I will come, and performe my promise.

Bee you still in prayer, still meditating vpon the holie scripture, and alway be patient, and suffer.

I am not ignorant but your greefe will bee much: but so quicklie to bee ouerthrowen, and to bee out of all hope of my returne, I cannot like that.

Where is your faith? A great faith you had neede of, especiallie on this behalfe: for although you see not mee, yet are you seene of mee g, in- g Ecclus. 23 19
to whose hands you are to commend both your selfe, and all that you haue.

For although you are not priuie

of the Imitation of Christ.

to my iudgements: yet hauing a strong faith, you must of necessitie say [h] *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and iust are thy iudgements.* [h] psa. 119. 137.

So then bee of good comfort, for this affliction is not to your destruction, but for the glorie of God.

I denyed your petition, because I would haue due proofe of your faith and loue.

For, all this I did that you should well vnderstand both your own weaknes, and my goodnes [i]. [i] psa. 119. 67 71.

I knowe what you are [k], better than your selfe doth. Yea, I haue knowen you thoroughlie, not of late, but from euerlasting [l]. [k] psa. 7. 9. [l] Wisd. 8. 8

Wherfore acknowledge the benefit which you haue by mee; behold how miserable you should bee, if once I forsake you.

As yet you haue not profited sufficientlie in the knowledge of your selfe. And because it is verie expedient that you haue that knowledge, my will was that by experience you shold attaine thereunto.

It is verie good for you to bee forsaken, to be troubled, to be humbled sometime, that so the better you may euen sensiblie perceiue your owne

The fourth booke

nrpſ.119. owre weakenes [m].

71 I knowe right well this will make you a good diſciple of mine. And what, I pray you, haue you loſt, if heereby you prooue more wiſe and watchfull?

Oftentimes you are too arrogant, and forgetfull of your ſelfe, thinking that goodnes to be within you which is not; ſelfe-loue doth deceiue you, and while you thinke not of the giuer, you doe abuſe the gift. I made you drunke; but you forgat how the grape did growe vppon mine owne vine.

Trie your ſelfe a little, acknowledge your ſtrength. If that which you had came of your ſelfe, why did you not holde it? But if you could not hold it, confeſſe that you receiued it from a-

n 1.Cor.4 7 boue [n]. And therefore aſcribe all the honor to the mercie of God, and o-

Iam.1.17. penlie confeſſe, how without mee you

o Ioh.15.5 can doe nothing [o].

Conſider both in what ſteede I ſtand you, and how able alſo I am to confirme you in all goodnes.

Where were you before I called you, but weltering in ſin and wickedneſſe? And now how would you wander, if I directed you not? Yea, and when

when also went it well with you, if you had not my fauor?

S. And I saide, At no time, sweet Lord. Thou alone, art my singular good friend, in all things, and aboue all most faithfull.

L. Why then did you purpose so wickedlie with your selfe, to goe after strange louers?

What misliked you in me; was it either my maiestie, or my bewtie?

S. Ah Lord, there is none comparable to thee, either for bewtie, or for glorie, or for riches, or for authority; neither in heauen nor in earth is anie like vnto thee [p]. For thou onely art most hie ouer all creatures.

The heauens are thine [q], the earth also is thine; thou hast laide the foundation of the worlde, and all that therein is.

Much is it that thou hast imparted vpon thy creatures, by which, thy beautie, wisedome, and goodnes doth appeare [r]: but yet in comparison of thy blessed, and glorious presence, it is nothing. So that by experience I haue learned nowe, that I cannot lack thy companie one houre together, but with much griefe to my soule.

p 1 Kin. 8. 23

q psal. 89 11

r Rom. 1. 20

Returne

L. Returne therefore vnto mee; thou hast hitherto wandered enough about.

Let not hence-forth to bee more staied, and milde, and faithfull, yea and to trust in mee, not onely in the day of my gratious visitation, but much more in the night of tentation.

I haue let you slip, that being wearied, you might returne vnto mee the more speedily, and beeing frustrate of outward comfort, at length vnderstand how much you are bound vnto mee, that so often haue called vnto you.

And therefore listen now at the last, for it is not without cause that sometime you are forsaken; that you are colde sometime in zeale; that it irketh you; that you are ouer-wearied with tentations; that on all sides you are afflicted; that you can neither finde anie counsaile, nor feele comfort, but are enforced to endure anguish and miserie at all times, and in all places.

I am absent, to the ende you may knowe how needfull it is that I bee present with you, not onely in one matter, or in a speciall cause, but in

euerie occasion, in all places and times, so well earlie as late, whereſoeuer you ſhall become, go, or ſtand.

For this will teach you to walke warilie with your friend; to abſteine from vanities, and to take heede of offenſes [s].

[s] Mich. 6.8

I doo leaue you, that you maie well vnderſtand how much you are bound to loue mee, that is, that you maie ſee a manner how to loue mee in deed.

It is verie true you thought your ſelfe more ſtout, and happie, than in truth you were: but when I did once withdraw mine aide from you a little, it then appeared to the world howe you were verie poore, and miſerable [t].

[t] Reu. 3.17

How ſhall your loue bee knowne, vnleſſe you beare my yoake with patience?

Sometime I ſee you to waxe ſluggiſh, and therefore I doo hide my ſelfe for an houre, like a friend ſtanding behinde the wall [u], that you maie be ſtirred vp the more zelouſly to ſeeke me.

[u] Song. 2.9

I knowe for my part, and ſee all things [x]: but troublous trials (which are good for many cauſes (doo make

[x] Eccluſ. 42 verſe. 19. 20

The fourth booke

you the more heedie and wise in all your actions [y].

[y] Isai. 28. 19

Moreouer if you loue mee, you will not waxe the more sluggish in seeking mee for all this; if you like me, you will seeke me.

What? Wot you not, how riches painefullie come by, are kept most carefullie? who so wisheth rest, as the wearied man? Who loueth so kindlie, as hee which hath sighed most heauily? And is not that iewel which was lost, and is found againe, much more esteemed than before it was [z]? So, euen so is the ioie double, and the mirth doubled, at the long wished presence of the beloued.

[z] Luk. 15. 19

And therefore it is much for your profit that I withdraw my selfe; because I doe it, not for any ill will to you-wardes, but vpon very good cause; so do I dally with my friends.

Let it suffice you at this time, that you haue bin in my fauor to heare so much as my mouth.

Besides, when you haue neede, returne vnto mee, and feare not. For I neuer shut mine eares against that person which humblie and earnestlie crieth for mine assistance [a].

[a] Mat. 7, 7. 8

Chap.

CHAP. 18

1. The confidence of a true Christian. 2. God iustifieth the vngodlie. 3. giueth whatsoeuer good is to man. 4. will haue no man to despaire. 5. but that all sinners should flie vnto his mercie.

MY Lorde God will helpe mee, therefore shall I not be confounded[a]. a Isai. 50. 7.

S. Let it grieue no bodie, though I loue much to speake with my Lord God, whose goodnes hath allured, & inflamed me both to pray and to meditate in such sort, that me thinks I should bee too hard and vnkinde, if I made none answere vnto his wordes.

But happelie some one will saie against mee, Therefore neither doe you feare God, seeing you are a foule sinner, vnworthie euen to liue in this world.

Whence is it, that you dare so presume in your heart? And, beeing the last, and vilest of all others, with

what face can you thrust forth your selfe so to talke with your Lorde God? Whom do you make your selfe?

a Eccluſ. 15 verſe 9 Iohn. 9. 33

Oh, my louing Lorde, doe thou answere on my behalfe. For the mouth of the wicked is opened vpon me.

b Pſa. 109. 2.

If I woulde iuſtifie my ſelfe, mine owne mouth ſhall condemne mee. And though I were cleane, yet did not my ſoule know ſo much.

c Iob. 9. 20.

Oh Lord, thou knoweſt my follie, and my ſhamefaſtnes. Speake thou on my behalfe, and I full gladly will keepe ſilence.

L. Giue thou none heede to the wordes of the wicked: but rather do thou remember howe I haue ſaide, *I came not to call the righteous, but the ſinners vnto repentance*.

d Mark. 2. 17 e Mat. 28. 17 Mark. 17. 2 Heb. 2. 8.

Am not I to do what I will? Who may reſiſt my pleaſure?

If I thinke it good to ſhew fauour to thee-ward, though little thou deſerue the ſame at mine handes, who ſhall reproue me therfore?

f Rom. 8. 33. 34. g Iohn. 8. 7

He that is without ſinne, let him throwe the firſt ſtone at thee. But if they, all the packe of them, are ſinners, with what face can they find fault

fault with my fauor to thee-ward?

You haue not chosen mee [h], but my mercy did preuent you. [h] Ioh. 15. 16.

Dareth anie yet murmure against you for comming vnto me? Comfort thy selfe, his murmure is not against thee, but flatlie against my person, because it is I that receiue [i], and eate with sinners [k]. [i] 1. Tim. 1. 15. [k] Matt. 9. 11. 12, 13

And why ought you not to challenge mine acquaintance, the which I reioice to offer rather than to withdraw from any one?

S. Oh gratious Lorde, lay not this sin to their charge, but to mee, and to my sins.

I cannot denie, but deseruedlie they conceiue ill of mee; yea I doo openlie acknowledge this withall, that I am much more wicked than any mā doth knowe.

L. You do well thus to humble your selfe. For in so dooing, you shall euer gaine, and more easely obtaine my fauor.

Notwithstanding, I will not therefore cast you away, because you are a sinner, and faultie, albeit that should make you both to thinke basely of your selfe, and alway to haue in minde what great sinnes you are pollured

withall.

But that you perish not through desperation, consider howe manie righteous men I haue made of sinners [l], freendes of enemies, choosing the humble, and refusing the proude [m].

I haue no neede of anie gifte of thine [n]: onely this I require at your handes, namely, that you loue mee with a pure heart [o], and I am satisfied.

S. I am cleane dashed, for, alas, there is nought within mee to stir vp your loue thus to me-ward.

L. I do neither respect nor require the things that this world doth offer to get fauour withall; if you do loue, and that your loue bee feruent, and constant, it is all that I aske.

But, I pray thee, whose are the things that do, or may adorne a man? Are not all things mine, whatsoeuer doe glitter either in the bodie, or minde [p]?

As for that of the world, and which set out the bodie, they ought little to trouble your minde. But the things which belong to the beautifying of vertue, it standeth you vpon to seeke, that you may please the Lord in the

l Mark 2. 17 Luke. 15. 1. 2, &c.
m Luke. 1. 51 52. &c.
n Luke. 18. 14 Iames. 4. 6
o Psa. 50. 11 12.
o Mar. 12. 33
p Iam. 1. 17. 1. Cor. 4. 7.

light of the liuing.

Howbeit, you haue well done in humbling, and accusing your selfe so well outwardly as inwardlie before the face of my maiesty, by confessing vnfainedlie your great weaknes, and wickednesse, and by fetching deepe sighes, for that you are verie vnworthie to chalenge the fauour of my familiaritie euen but one houre, beeing as I am a glasse pure without spot [q], and you are a great sinner & vncleane [r] euen from your infancie.

And therefore be euer mindefull both of your fraile condition, and of my glorious maiestie, and so with humble reuerence approch boldly into my presence.

For I am hee that putteth awaie thine iniquities, and will not remember thy sins [s]; it is I that iustifie the vngodlie [t], and this I doe for mine holie name sake; yea and I am still readie to minister greater giftes of mercie vnto thee.

Because I doe euer choose to shew fauor rather then displeasure, as one who had rather spare than punish.

Yea, all this seemeth but little in mine eyes, neither am I so content with the first grace that I wil not adde

[q] Wis. 7. 26
[r] Gen. 8. 21
[s] Isai. 43. 25
[t] Rom. 4. 5

a second, or a thirde rather, yea, in verie deede, as I can set none ende
u Psa. 145. 9 to my mercies u: so neither can the number of my giftes and benefits be
x Psa. 68. 19 recited x.

Last of all, after that I for my part haue pardoned sinnes, and men for their partes by their goodnesse haue testified to the world their vnfained repentance, then doe I restore for the most part the comfort of mine healthfull countenance, by powring in most plentifull maner the grace of mine holy spirit.

And although a sinner doe abide still in the flesh: yet doe I receiue him into my familiaritie, so that he is not to feare the vtter confusion for sins committed: but rather to thanke and praise God, that old thinges bee passed awaie, and that all things are become new y.

y 2. Cor. 5. 17 So gratious, and mercifull am I, that alwaies I am more readie to forgiue, than thou art to beg forgiuenes at mine handes; more ready to giue, than thou art to aske.

Therefore whie feare you? What dismaieth you to approch vnto the side of such fauors? And why do you estrange your selfe from so greate kindnes

kindenes offered vnto you so frankelie of mine own accord?

Doubtlesse, though you did certainly vnderstand that I were purposed to giue you the deniall: yet ought you not to desist from praier, nor yet to be out of al hope of being heard; but so much the more earnestlie to be instant in crying, vntill you were heard.

For my mercies are infinite, and what I deme at one time, may bee granted fauourablie at another.

How knowe you whether I will turne my face vnto you, and grant you the desire of your heart?

And what saith the Prophet concerning mee? Approche vnto him, and be illightened, so shall not your faces be confounded.

Wherefore accuse your slow comming vnto me rather than your often approching; and rather your fearefull shamefastnes, than your prompt presuming of forgiuenes.

To hope well of my goodnes, is a verie token of true humilitie, and of a great faith.

This doo I speake, that you may not offend; and that when you doo offend, you despaire not, but rise

againe with speede, For yet you haue hope, and an aduocate with the Father [z].

[z] 1. Iohn. 2. 1

What? Looke you to be all worthie before you make accesse vnto mee? And of your selfe when will you bee so?

It only such as are good and woorthie, and great, and perfect, should approch vnto mee, to whome should sinners and publicans approch?

So then what saith the Gospell? *There resorted vnto him publicans, and sinners to heare him* [a].

[a] Luke. 15. 1

Therefore let the vnwoorthie approch, that they may become woorthie; let the wicked approch, that they may bee made good; let the weake and vnperfect approch, that they may proue strong and perfect; yea let all and euerie one approch, that they may receiue from the abundant streames of the wel of life [b]. I am the well of life, that cannot be drawne drie.

[b] Ioh. 4. 14

He which is a thirst, let him come vnto me and drinke [c]. And he which hath nothing, let him come and buy without siluer and without money [d]. He that is sicke, let him come to be healed [e]. Hee that is neither hot nor cold,

[c] Ioh. 7. 37
[d] Isai. 55. 1
[e] Mat. 9. 12

cold let him come to be inflamed[f]. [f] Mat. 9. 24

Hee that is feareful, let him come to be encouraged: he that is sorrowfull, let him come to be comforted.

He that is withered, let him come to be fatted; he that is wearied with cares, let him come to bee refreshed with ioy.

Lo my delite is to be with the children of men[g]. [g] Rom. 8. 31

Hee that desireth wisedome, let him come vnto my lessons[h]. [h] Esa. 119. 9 24

Hee that seeketh riches, let him come to receiue those which are eternall, and incorruptible[i]. [i] Mat. 6. 19 20

Hee that hunteth for honor, let him come to get an euerlasting name in the inheritance of heauen; hee that wisheth for felicity, let him come, and hee shall taste the soueraigne, eternall, and infinite happines[k]. [k] 1. cor. 2. 9

I, euen I it is which giueth al temporall good things[l], yea and besides that, I giue eternall riches in the heauens[m]. And what I promise I will performe, at such time as my commandements are duly obserued. And he then shall bee crowned gloriously in heauen, that hath foughten couragiously in this world. [l] Iames. 17 [m] Rom. 6. 23 [n] 2. Tim. 2. 11 12

Chap.

Chap. 19.

1. The desire of a Christian Soule is *neuer satisfied, till God bee enioyed,*
2. No comfort anie whit comparable to the spirituall ioie.

ET the meditation of mine heart bee acceptable in thy sight [a].

a Psa. 19. 14

What can be more comfortable, What more ioyfull to the faithfull Soule, than still deuoutly to meditate vpon her Lord God; that whome she cannot as yet beholde in a cleere, and blessed sight, at the least she may, as it were, make him present by earnest calling him into minde?

Therefore let her behold him as in a glasse darkelie [b], whome shee is not to see face vnto face.

b 1. Cor. 13. 12

And albeit she may not haue a ful sight of him in his maiestie: yet let her search for him by types in the Scriptures.

Oh that the care to seeke the face of the Lord did neuer waxe cold within me, but daily more and more encreased!

Howbeit,

Howbeit, the soule that loueth God, hath a wonderfull desire to enioie the sight of God. For to see him is happines indeede, and the absolute felicity[c]. [c] Reu. 22.4

Wherefore she desireth this blessednes, that, her whole appetite hauing attained her ende, she may be satisfied, and at quiet: for nothing in the world is able to content her[d]. [d] Eccle. 1,8

For long experience hath taught her, that the more shee straieth from celestiall happines, the more vnhappie and vnquiet she is, inasmuch as in this world nothing is permanent, or durable[e], that may asswage the heat of her affection. [e] 1.Cor.7.31 1.Iohn.2.15 16.17

So then let hermake returne vnto him that made her[f], and let her desire to be blessed of him, who at the first created her. [f] Gen.1,26 27 Wisd. 2. 23

For doubtlesse, he that made the soule, must satisfie the soule with good things[g]. Because, such a desire hath hee instilled into her, that hee being gon, nothing will content her; nor any ioie comfort her greatlie. [g] Psa. 103.5

And therefore, soule of mine, stand not heere still, for this is no place of rest for thee: but mount aloft, ascende

cende vnto him that made thee. For he hath now sent his messengers, & biddeth thee to ascend.

So many desires of eternall life as he inspireth, so many messengers hee doth sende. Which being entertained, prepare thy selfe to thy iournie.

Then goest thou on, when thou desirest to see him; when thou laborest to please him; when thou renouncest this worlde; when thou dooſt, whatsoeuer thou dooſt, euen of pure loue to him-ward.

For had hee not first sought thee, and powred holie cogitations into thy brest, thou couldest neuer seeke him [h].

[h] Ioh. 6. 44

For that soule dooth languish, not for loue, but throgh wearines, which is not inlightened with the beames of the eternall sunne [i].

[i] Iohn. 1. 5

But, if through the sweete blastes of the Southren winde, her frozen coldnes, and sorrowe bee once resolued, then by reason of the light inspired, and incomprehensible diuinity, she beginneth to swear, through the hotnes of loue.

Oh infinite heate of the true Sonne, what boilings dooſt thou cause then within the heart of the louer!

louer? Thou dissolueſt the darknes of a sorrowfull minde, and bringeſt the laborsome toile vnto nothing. The long time and daies of pouerty thou dooſt comfort and that abundantly, with one simple beame of thy glorious light.

O salue of the sorrowfull! ô shining light of such as wander and seeke! k Mat. 9. 12

Shine thou continually vpon mee; prepare thou a mansion place within mee, euen till thine euerlasting light do appeare.

Oh how sweete, and how comfortable will thy presence bee! seeing euen of a little remembrance, so vnspeakeable ioy doth arise.

Howe gladlie can I turne vnto thee; how frankely doo I renounce euen this world, that I may be comforted with thine heauenly fauor!

For it will bee none hard matter for the soule which longeth for the sight of thy countenance, to bereaue her selfe of all outwarde pleasure, when shee shall either feele nowe a greater in the minde, or very shortly expect with a perfect faith for the same.

Furthermore, none is to be so fon-

liſh

liſh as to thinke, that thou wilt leaue the deuout ſoule anie long while vncomforted; or that the gifts of thy fauour which ſhe is to receiue for all her conqueſts ouer nature, ſhall bee ſmall: for no earthly comfort, whatſoeuer it bee or whence ſoeuer it ariſe, is any whit comparable either in the qualitie or quantitie of ſweetnes to the heauenly ioy.

And therefore labor thou, ô faithfull ſoule, to ſhew thy ſelfe ſuch toward thine heauenly ſpouſe Chriſt, that he may continually bee gratious and fauourable vnto thee; for through him and in him you ſhall in moſt abundant manner finde that, which exceedinglie ſhall miniſter comfort vnto you in all extremities.

The oftener you haue acceſſe vnto him, and the nigher you doe approche vnto his ſide, the ſweeter he will appeare, and the more amiable in your eies.

But if you withdrawe your ſelfe, then the loſſe will be your owne; and he abiding in his beautie, ſhall feele neither griefe nor trouble.

You ſtand in need of his, but he of no mans goodnes.

So that you may become bleſſed through

through him, but so cannot hee by your proceeding.

Hee alone sufficeth himselfe; hee alone can neither bee augmented, nor diminished.

Through his goodnes all thinges are, whatsoeuer bee, whether they haue life, sense, or vnderstanding [l]. l Act. 17.28

And therefore iust it is that all creatures euerlastingly should blesse him [m]. m Psa. 150.6

Oh how gladly would I discourse and speake of him vnto thee, if I were able sufficiently so to doo!

But what? He neither is, nor may be vttered. Againe, as he cannot be vttered by meanes, so can he not bee conceiued in mind.

Which being so, thinke notwithstanding of thy Creator so well as man may, taking the remembrance of his aboundant sweetnes for a comfort, vntill such time as hee reuealeth the sight of his owne countenance vnto thee in the heauens [n]. n Reue. 22.4

CHAP.

The fourth booke

CHAP. 20.

1. A complaint of the Soule for *the want of her blessed State, 2. What weeping pleaseth God. 3. Who truly* blessed. 4. A description of God.

a Psa. 31. 22

I *Said in mine heart I am cast out of thy sight* [a]. Mine heart is wounded within me, throgh the long differring of thy glorie.

I will speake therefore, and reason with my grieued Soule. The great zeale of Ieue compelleth mee to speake, and suffereth nothing to bee concealed from thee.

What then shall I saie? Lo my God, in peace is my most bitter bitternes.

He that is ignorant, worteth not the meaning heereof But it is not so with mee. I knowe, and I vnderstand it, and therfore I am not ashamed to sing with the Prophet.

b Psa. 38. 15. c Reue. 3. 15 Ecclus. 42, verse 20

I speake to thee my Lord [b], who knoweſt all things [c]; and giueſt both knowledge and vnderstanding according to thy good pleasure, that neither

neither I maie glorie more than is meete I shoulde, nor the foole aduance mee, when in trueth I am simple.

I maie confesse then what I haue receiued from thee. And yet what neede haue I to tell you thereof, when as you are neither ignorant, nor can take anie pleasure of the same.

Againe, what comfort can come vnto you, which are the comfort of the comfortlesse?

So that the profit is mine, which doe lack the consolation of wordes, thereby to stir vp mine affection to thee-ward, and to finde some ease for my desolate soule.

For, seeing I may not behold thy presence; I will bewayle thine absence; because euen this is a token of loue, and a great pleasure to the louing soule.

Nowe then the sense of this sentence appeareth. Because it is rightly saide of the louing soule, howe the more feruently she loueth, and the more earnestly shee longeth after eternall things, the more truly she feeleth the power therof working within her.

They

The fourth booke

They are not cold wordes, but to the vnkinde ſoule; neither deafe organs, but to the hardened hart.

The louing and zealous ſoule knoweth this wel; and is ſo often inflamed in heart, as ſhe is pricked with the deſire of eternall peace.

And therefore ſhee ſpeaketh to thee her Lord God, not to men, of whom ſhe would not be knowen.

And although ſometime ſhee talketh with men: yet that which they heare is to the outward ſenſe. But whatſoeuer ſhe ſaith to thee, it is to the verie ſoule, and rather by ſighing of the hart, than by ſounding words.

Lo (ſaith ſhe) in peace is my moſt bitter bitternes. As if ſhee ſaid; After that of thy goodnes I returned vnto the peace of minde, the tranſitorie ſtate of the world began to be ſtill more grieuous vnto mee. For I ſee in this peace, how farre I am ſeparated from the ſoueraigne peace.

And indeede beeing firſt buſied with earthly deſires, and mooued with diuerſe paſſions, I was greatly hindered from ſpirituall cogitations, and ſo from heauenlie contemplation, after which I ſhould haue much longed: but that could I leaſt

of

of all doe, because through slothfulnes I did forgo all sense of inward sorrow.

But now seeing the troubles of idle thoughts are taken awaie, I do somwhat rest in the peace of conscience, and am drawne vnto heauenly matters with mine whole heart, and I do more lament, that I do not enioy the good things of God, than erst I did mourne being vexed with the troubles of this world.

So that it is bitternes to my soule euen to liue in this worlde, and to goe vnder the heauie burden of sin. But it is bittereſt of all, when so much as I may, all mine affections beeing gathered together, I do enioie now the good things of the hart, and bend my selfe, euen with hartie zeale towarde the armes of eternall peace, and yet may not attaine thereu to, because of the bondes of my mortall state.

And this makes mee euen with griefe of hart to crie vnto thee, and to saie:

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliuer me from the bodie of this death[d]? d Rom. 7. 24

Ther is none so greeuous a burden vnto me, as stil to wander frō thee by liuing

liuing in the world; for labouring in loue, I wish for no comforte beside thee.

For by good experience I haue long sithence learned, that my soule can neither bee satisfied with y good
e Eccles. 1. 8 things of this worlde [e], nor yet bee blessed, vntill she be ioyned vnto thee in the celestiall habitation.

For as exceedingly she doth loue, burne, and vse contemplation while she is in the bodie: so will her desire bee insatiable vntill the bodie bee laid off.

And therefore her ende must bee made perfect by attaining the soueraigne felicitie, and the light of thy
f Reu. 22. 4 countenance [f].
g 1. Tim. 6. 16 O King of heauen [g], so amiable in all respects; O my all louelie beloued, euen whollie to be desired, when
Reuel. 1. 5
Reuel. 15. 14 wilt thou fill mee with the light of
h Ps. 16. 11. thy countenance [h]; when wilt thou satisfie my longing with the well of life?

My soule hath much thirsted after
i Psal. 42. 2 thee [i]; and greatly will bee troubled vntill she attaine thee.

Liuing in the world, and not seeing thee, I can take no comfort of whatsoeuer I beholde; so greatlie doth

doth zeale waxe hot, that not once, but often I breake into these words;

When shall I come, and appeare before the face of my God? k Psal. 42 2.

And this loue of mine ceasseth not, but encreaseth more and more, in such sort, that I am driuen euen to weepe night and daie, while continuallie I doe thinke with my selfe, *Where is now my God?*

For it is a comfort to the louing soule to weepe for thy sake, while she must want her desire; and still expect thy comming.

And these teares doe more feede and refresh the louing soule, than if shee enioyed all the things of this world. For did she loue them l, shee would not weepe for thee. l Mat. 24. 6

Oh how blessed, & pleasing to thee is the sheading of such teares!

For they doe both kill the desires of secular and temporall ioyes; and also they obtaine the celestiall consolation.

And therefore none do shed such holy teares, but they which are both singularly in loue, and verie notably religious.

Far of another kinde be the teares of such as miserablie bee troubled in this

this world.

For one man weepeth because he is sicke; another for that hee is oppressed; another because he is iniuried; another because his minde is contraried: but it is thou, religious soule onely, which powrest forth teares euen of pure loue to thy Sauior-ward: as for temporall damage, & worldly causes, they trouble thee not, for thou submittest thy selfe to the righteous iudgement of God [m], and art thankfull.

m Psal. 119. verse. 137.

And for so doing, let no worldlie creature iudge thee either fooliſh, or impatient: because thy teares do not greeue, but comfort; they doe not blur the face, but wash it; they hurt not the eyes, but they purifie the sight of the minde.

Howbeit, let others conceiue heereof as they will, I canne not thinke otherwise than well of you; for I doe wish to drinke deep of such teares.

S I f you wish to weepe with mee, then may you bee comforted with mee.

Oh that your soule were as I am! you coulde neuer forget what I doe feele.

I

of the Imitation of Christ.

I know whome I credit; and sure I am it is a more easie thing to denie that there is any heauen and earth, than that there is a God.

And I knowe also hee is my full happines; and that I shall neuer bee blessed vntill I haue an absolute sight of his maiestie [n].

n Reu. 22.4

Whose sight becausse it is not yet graunted me, nor alwaies assured me, doth make me to lament, inasmuch as I am depriued of happines, wrapped in the darknes of this life, and downpeised with the waight of mine owne infirmitie [o], that I am not of power to suffer that wonderfull light, and that whatsoeuer I do think cõcerning the glory of heauen, is so little, and ouershadowed as it were with a cloude.

o Wis. 9.15

Hence it is that I double my complaint in steede of a song; and while they still say vnto mee, *Where is thy God* [p]? my spirit is the more troubled,

p Psa. 42.10

For thus I thinke then, *where is my felicity? where is the ful ioy of mine hart? where is my true peace and rest?*

Where be all the good things that are vnspeakeable, but onely in my God? And when shall I enioy them, vnless I bee ioyned vnto him, hauing nothing betweene?

The fourth booke

Yea, when shall I there bee? I knowe not, but I beleeue well; I doo hope well, but yet I haue not.

Why then, where is my God, whome I loue so, and yet I see him not? through whose loue I am so often wounded; through whose absence I am so grieued; through whose gratious visitation so refreshed sometime?

VVhere is my God, whome euen once to see, is to know all things?

Where is my God, in whom both mine heart, and my flesh doe so earnestly desire to reioyce?

Where is my God, for whose loue I suffer such paine and sorrow? His verie remembrance is sweete, but his presence is more louelie, and expelleth all sadnes fro mine heart.

VVhere is mine hope, and my crowne? Is it not in thee my God, and in thy blessed countenance?

1. Cor. 13 verse 12

Oh, shewe mee once thy glory, and thy face: so will I cease to complaine.

If I contend a little with thee, O blame mee not; extreame zeale of good will hath many woonderfull deuises.

Iam driuen to expect, and moued still

still to long; and so this ioyfull combat doth continue.

CHAP. 21.

1. The delaying of the happie is patiently to be borne. 2. The felicitie of the life to come. 3. with a prayer for the same.

O *Lord, I haue loued the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth* [a].

a psal. 25. 8

How gladlie I would be with thee, thou knowest full well O my GOD; and how entirelie I desire the same, I am not able sufficiently to expresse.

I wish it, not onely when I am euill at ease; but also what prosperity soeuer I enioy, my desire is to bee with thee.

But how shall my longing bee satisfied?

Heere it grieueth mee to continue, and yet of necessitie I must, but my desire is to bee with thee, and I may not yet.

b phil. 1. 23

And therefore I see no remedie,

but that I am with patience to endure this delaie, and to refer my wishing to thine holy will.

For what? Is it meet I should murmur, when it must be so? God forbid.

Againe, I haue the examples of many of Gods children, which haue vsed long patience in this life [b], and yet their harts were in heauen [c].

[b] Heb. 11. 13. 14. &c.
[c] Col. 3. 1. 2

Therefore if thy will be to prolong my pilgrimage, I am willing to abide and obey your pleasure.

Howbeit, that with lesse griefe I may beare my longing to bee with thee, I will till that time still meditate with my selfe of that celestiall habitation.

Yet I presume not to pearce into the least of those ioyes, which thou hast prepared for such as loue thee [d]: but of this and that I will meditate, to the end that mine affection beeing pressed downe and infected oftentimes, it may bee stirred vp, and lifted into the hope of eternall blisse.

[d] 1. Cor. 2. 9

O that that day had once shined, whither then had the ioyes of heauen rauished me!

How merrie at the heart should I bee then, and howe happie should I thinke my selfe!

Howe happie should I then bee, enioy-

enioying a continuall peace [e]! e Reue. 21.4

From thencefoorth should I make none enquirie for any thing, seeing no secret could be hid.

But my life is spent in darkenesse, and therefore no maruell though my sight doe dazle betweene the clouds of glorie.

Notwithstanding I will lift vp mine eies, and though afarre off, behold and salute that holie citie Ierusalem builded in the heauen euen of liuelie stones [f], namely of holie angels and men, replenished continuallie with praise, and mirth, and magnifying the Lord their God for euer and euer. f Reue. 21.10 11. &c.

Now therefore my soule, take vnto thee the wings of desire, and fly vpward, flie I saie from all bodilie senses: ascend from the visible forme of this world, vnto the holie house of God, euen vnto the newe Ierusalem, builded substantially *in* aie lasting peace, crowned with glorie and honor, and blessed with the abundance of all good things.

Lo. Wonderfull and vnspeakeable are the things (of heauen) which no man either can, or may vtter [g]. g 1. Cor. 2.9

No sense is able to conceiue, neither can the vnderstanding of man

The fourth booke

attaine to knowe, howe God is in his ſainctes glorious, and wonderfull in his maieſtie.

Mount thou in cogitation euen vnto the higheſt things, ſtretch thy deſire into the euerlaſting eternitie, and ſay with the Prophet [h]; *Glorious things are ſpoken of thee, O citie of God.*

h pſ.87.3

There whatſoeuer can be wiſhed of man, is had [i]; and what is once got, is kept without care [k].

i Reu.21.4
k Reu.7.17

God there is beheld face to face cleerely [l], truely, continually, and eternallie.

l 1.Cor.13.12

There the bleſſed and all glorious Trinitie, in one vnſeparable vnitie, which of all the bleſſed citizens of heauen is worſhipped, prailed, & magnified [m], is perfectly knowen.

m Reu.7.12

There is mine onely and right ſingularlie beloued friend [n], which is more precious (to mee) than all riches [o], and the treaſure aboue all to bee deſired, euen my Lorde Ieſus Chriſt [p], the immortall ſpouſe of the Church [q], in whome are hid [r] (but yet reuealed to the Saints) from the beginning of the worlde, the whole treaſures of wiſedome and knowledge [ſ].

n Sal.5.1.1 2. &c.
o Mat.10.37 38
Mat.6.19. 20.21
p Rom.1.3.7 &c.
q Ephe.5.25 26.&c. Reuel.21.9
r Mat.11.25.
ſ Coloſ.2.3

O

of the Imitation of Christ.

O how iocund are the saints now before the face of the most holy, who is the cause and spring of their blessednes!

For there he speaketh vnto them not in parables, but plainly of the Father [t]. [t] Ioh. 16.25.

Hee is their booke, euen the worde which in the beginning was with god [u], teaching all things, and performing all things, so that they want nothing in glorie. [u] Iohn. 1.1

O blessed, and euerlasting glorie, not of small remembrance, but all happie in God his presence!

There is also the most glorious Mother of our Sauiour, and constant virgine Marie, bewtifying the whole celestiall Court with her comlinesse and bewtie, compassed and accompanied with troupes of virgins, as with sweete Roses and Lillies of the vallies.

There be the angels and archangels, placed in order, who most cheerfullie sound forth the praises of God. [x] Gen. 49. 10 Num 24. 17 Dan 9, 24 25 Isai. 7, 14 Iere. 31, 22, Psal, 132, 11 Hag. 1, 8, 9

There bee the Patriarches, and Prophets, euen they which beeing filled long ago with the holy Ghost, did foretell of Christ his comming [x],

whome now they both knowe, and euermore confesse to be their Lord
y Reu 7. and Sauior, the king of kings y, and
14. perfect God.
Reue. 19. There they behold eie to eie their
16. Redeemer, whome long they looked for, and for whose comming they onged.

There be the Lords Apostles, and disciples, those most reuerend and renowmed Fathers, which were filled with holinesse and grace, and laide a strong foundation of the Catholike faith.

There especially shineth that re-
z Mat. 3, 13 uerend man Iohn, which baptized our
14 &c. Sauior Christ z, and was a speciall
Mar. 1. 9. friend a of my Spouse.
10. There is Peter, and Paule, & An-
Luk, 3. 21, drewe, and Philip, and Thomas, and
a Ioh. 20. 2 Iames, and Iohn, and all the other A-
Ioh. 21. 7. postles and Euangelists, pillers of the
20. Church.

To keepe the faith, and to followe the example of these men, is the readie way to euerlasting life.

Moreouer, there bee the valiant Martyrs enriched with their proper blood, and euerlastinglie blessed with Christ, whose bodies though they were most cruellie flean: yet could

not

of the Imitation of Christ.

not their soules by anie torments be seuered from Christ.

Also, there bee the noble Confessors, which contemned this present life, that they might be in heauen.

There bee the great and glorious Doctors, that were so carried aloft in contemplation, of which many haue left a liuely image of holines in their wrightings.

There be yong men and maidens, olde men and children praising the name of the Lord continuallie, and ascribing the goodnes which they had at any time vnto his mercie.

There they are I say, alway gratefull, alway zealous, alway iocund, alway religious, neuer loathing, but euer louing the Lord.

Oh, how glorious is this kingdome, where all the Saints doo raigne with Christ, arraied with the first roabe [b], and be without care of the other! [b] Reue. 6. 11 Reuel. 7. 13.

There they followe the Lambe whereseoeuer he goeth [c], for they cannot part; but reioycing euerlastingly, shall reioice in the Lord. [c] Reue. 14. 4

O my Soule, muse thou vpon these things, and cast thy thoughts vpon heauenly matters.

The fourth booke

That place indeede is an holy place, and God is in the same.

[d] Reu. 21. 4 There is surpassing ioy and peace[d]; good things abound, and euils there be none.

Oh, if thou couldest euen a little comprehend the vnspeakeable ioyes of God his Saints, then should you find some comfort:

For in me you shall be sure to find nothing but labour and sorrow, and tentations, and troubles of this world.

Oh that the giuer of supernal [e] Iam. 1. 17 light [e] would vouchsafe to inspire some portion of these ioyes into you and not send you backe vnto my new withering foode, but according to the riches of his superabundant mercie, purifie and rid you of all materiall formes, and bring you yea by force into the deepe of his eternall brightnes.

VVould to GOD you could carry backe from that heauenly sanctuarie, a forme and example of true holinesse which you might imitate.

For better, and more true are the examples of celestiall, and strong things, than they which are confirmed by earthlie demonstrations.

There-

of the Imitation of Christ.

Therefore grant Lord, that I may sauor and knowe what the perfect felicitie of saints is, not so much by written bookes thereof, as by the holie Ghost, which teacheth of celestiall secrets in such sort, as no sense of man is able to reach thereunto.

Grant also that from hencefoorth I may lift vp my mind more feruentlie vnto heauenly things; and amids my grieuous troubles, valiantly beare the garland of patience, til the debt of flesh being paid, I may attain through thy mercie vnto this felicitie that I so desire.

Chap.

The fourth booke

CHAP. 22.

1 A godly meditation, concerning the accesse vnto the holy of holies, euen Iesus Christ, the king of angels.
2. Godly petitions for the forgiuenes of sins.

Thou art my king, O God [a].

Arise now my soule, come, and enter into the wonderfull tabernacle, euen into the house of God.

For it is meet that omitting other things, thou with all reuerence doo proceede to salute our Lorde Iesus Christ [b], thy Sauiour [c], and redeemer [d], which is the head of all principalitie and power [e]; the ioy and crowne of all saincts; the assured trust and certaine hope of all the faithfull [f].

Hee it is which hath made [g], and redeemed thee [h]; he it is which hath for thy sake both laboured [i], strined [k], and ouercome [l].

He is thine aduocate [m], and the propitiation for thy sins.

He is thy comforter, thy prouider, and thy Lord [n].

a Psal. 44. 4

b Rom. 1. 3 7. &c.
c Mat. 1. 21
d Gal. 3. 13
e Reu. 17. 14
f Col. 1. 27
g psa. 100. 3, psa. 119. 73
h 1. pet 1. 18 19
i Isai. 53. 3 4. &c.
k 1. Cor. 15 verse 55. 56. &c.
l Mat. 4. 10 11 Iohn. 16. 33
m 1. Ioh. 2. 1 2
n Reu. 19. 16

of the Imitation of Christ.

He is thine onely & singular friend that feedeth among the lilies °, and loueth to rest him vpon thy breasts ᵖ.

° Sal.S.2 16

ᵖ Sal.S.1 12

Who euer hath doone the like for thee? who euer loued you so intirely?

Come thou vnto him; offer your selfe to him; open your whole heart, and vnfold euen your hidden secrets vnto him.

For no man will better either declare, or else reueale how you should behaue your selfe in this world, in the which, things fal out so strangely.

Let your wishes and praiers be directed vnto him; and in him let all your counsailes abide.

Vaine is the hope of man ᵠ; but he is the vpholder of peace.

ᵠ ps.62.9

Through him we haue open accesse vnto the Father ʳ; and from him we receiue all goodnes, and virtue ˢ.

ʳ Eph.2.18

ˢ 1.cor.1.30 31

Whether you mourne, or whether you reioyce, make continual recourse vnto him.

He is the glasse of life; the rule of righteousnes; the light of the soule; the loue of shamefastnes; and the ioy of a good conscience.

If thou loueſt him, it will be none hard

hard matter for thee to despise the vaine pleasures of this world; if thou loueſt him, all ſowre things will ſeeme ſweete; all heauie things will ſeeme light; and that which otherwiſe you ſhould miſlike, you will like
t Rom. 8. 35 right well for his ſake t.

To be briefe, of him, and through
u Ro. 11. 36 him, and for him, are all things u.

The principall ende both of all our thoughts, and of all our actions, and of our ſpeech, and of our reading, praying, meditating, and ſpeculation, ſhould be Ieſus Chriſt.

Through him you attaine ſaluati-
x Gal. 3. 13 on x, and euerlaſting life.

For his loue you will neither feare
y Rom. 8. 35 to die y, nor refuſe to liue z; becauſe
36
z Phil. 1. 23 you are to commit your ſelfe wholly to his truſt, and to preferre nothing before his loue, and honour.

Wherefore come neere, and giue thankes to thy Redeemer.

S. O moſt ſweete Ieſu, aboue all things to be loued, I ſalute thee moſt religiouſly, I commend thee moſt highly, and I bleſſe thee nowe and euerlaſtinglie with all thy creatures.

O moſt renowmed Ieſu, how can I praiſe thee as I ought? When ſhall

shall I thanke thee, as I am bound, in that thy mercies are so infinite to me-ward?

Againe, whatsoeuer I giue, it is thy gift, and I receiued it from thee [a]. a 1. co. 4. 7

But little or nothing it is that I haue: and can I then sacrifice of nothing?

Howbeit, accept I beseech thee, mine humble, base, and vile sacrifice; and let my gifts bee ascribed to thy goodnes.

Let the quires of heauenlie angels attending about thee, sound foorth thine infinite praises on my behalfe: also let the soules of the righteous repeate the same.

In the meane while what shall I doo in memorie, and praise of thy most sacred name?

Much I ought to doo, and for manie things I am greatly bound; yet am I not able to performe the least.

And therefore I will read of thee, O my sweete Sauiour, I will write of thee; I will sing of thee; I will thinke of thee, I will speake of thee, I will worke for thee, and for thee will I suffer.

In thee will I reioice, thee will I praise,

The fourth booke

praise, thee will I magnifie, thee will I glorifie.

As it is meete I will worship thee, because thou art my God [b], in whom I beleeue, whom I doo loue, seeke, and haue alway desired.

[b] Mat 4. 10

Giue mee some good signe, that mine eyes may beholde thy goodly countenance in the heauens.

Humbly I doo throwe downe my selfe at thy feete in heart, earnestly with teares desiring thy fauour, that thou wilt vouchsafe to be good vnto me.

Write my name in the Booke of life; and let that neuer be out-blotted, which thine holie hande hath written.

I, wretch that I am, and far inferior to any of thy saints, yet trusting boldly vpon the more than excellent prerogatiue of thy mercy, beseech thee, that at the least wise I may bee counted among the baset and woorst of thine elect.

I confesse, my life and conuersation is not such, that I dare presume anie thing of my selfe; and therefore all mine hope and comfort is, and resteth in the price of thy precious blood, wherein I doo whollie repose

my selfe, and deeme it requisite that I should doe so, together with all which I haue done, offended, deserued and omitted.

And therefore behold, most gracious Iesu, my basenes and humility, consider the affection of mine heart which I beare toward thee, not for my merits, but for thy mercie sake, which vouchsafest to bee loued euen of the vnworthie.

In respect of mine vnworthinesse I am greatlie ashamed to come in thy presence; but I am drawen on and emboldened through your wonderfull goodnesse and humilitie [b], which hast in perfect good will [c] yeelded not onely to become man [d], but also to suffer [e], die, and to bee buried for my sake: and therefore vnto thee doe I make recourse, for I finde no goodnes in my selfe.

b Mat. 17. 28 29.
c Rom. 5. 7
d Iohn. 1. 14
e Isai. 53. 3 4. &c.

Supplie that for my sake, which of my selfe I cannot performe.

Thou hast giuen me a desire [f] to pray vnto thee, to praise, and to blesse thee: because thou art mine hope, & my portion in the land of the liuing [g]. All my desire is to be with thee in the kingdom of heauen; but in asmuch as my time is not yet come, I will waite vntill

f Phil. 1, 23
g Psa. 142. 5

The fourth booke

vntill the night approch.

In the meane while this may be my comfort in the place of my pilgrimage, that I am mindfull of thy name and of thine exceeding great loue; & that I behold thee in this life by the eies of my faith.

To liue in this worlde, and yet to repose no truſt in thee, O Lord, were a thing intolerable to my ſoule.

h Luk. 6. 25 I doe not conſent to reioyce with the worlde [h]; and, that I may not abide without ioy and comfort, I haue

i i. Cor, 1. 31. determined to place my ioy in thee [i].

Much and often ſhould I goe aſtray greatly ſhould I be toſſed in cogitations, did I not retaine thee faſt in my minde, and thoughts.

And forſomuch as I am vnable to ſound the depth of thy diuinitie, I thinke it beſt for me to turne vnto the deedes and ſayings of thine humanitie; becauſe, being in theſe cogitations, I ſwarue not altogether from thy diuinitie.

k Iohn. 1 14 Mat. 1. 23. Thankes bee to thee, good Ieſu, ſweete and louely Ieſu, for vouchſafing to become my brother, to take my fleſh and bones vpon thee [k].

Thankes I ſay to thee for entering

ring into the wombe of good Marie thy mother, of whose maidenly flesh thou tookest the holy mẽbers of thy bodie, which thou diddest vnite to to thy diuine nature.

CHAP. 23.

A godly prayer, and commendation of our Sauiour Christ.

NOtwithstanding I am wicked, & guiltie of manifolde sinnes; yet haue I great hope of saluation, because of thy suffering, and merits: wherof as I haue a good mind to consider, so graunt, O my Lord Christ, that I may with good leaue so doe.

For who am I to approch nigh vnthee, vnlesse I haue licence?

I know mine vnworthinesse to appeare in his presence, whome the verie angels doe worship with great reuerence, saying:

Who is this that commeth out of the wildernes of this world, so abounding in pleasure?

There-

The fourth booke

Therefore, O most blessed Sauiour, I am farre vnmeete to thinke of thy glorie and honour, of thy beawty and magnificence; because I am earth and ashes [a], yea more base am I than earth and ashes, because I am sinfull, & prone vnto all wickednes.

a Eccluſ. 10 ve ſe. 9

But thou beeing made hier then heauen, hast the whole worlde vnder thy feete [b], and art worthy to be praised and honored for euermore.

b Mat. 28. 18 Hebr. 2. 8

Howbeit of thine vnspeakeable goodnesse, which passeth all vnderstanding, I am drawen in affection vnto thee, because thou art the comfort of the comfortlesse, & vsest most willingly to helpe most miserable sinners.

I acknowledge how I am not onely destitute of all comfort, especially of thy fauour; but also verie vnable to do good vnto my selfe.

But, mercifull Iesus, wouldest thou vouchsafe to consider my baseneſſe, then should I both be ayded and comforted most plentifully in this my trouble.

Therefore I see well, whensoeuer I am compassed about with affliction and tentation, I am straight waie

and

and without feare to flie vnto thee? for where mercie is most readie, there grace is in greatest plentie.

And when I haue a good minde to consider of thy most glorious estate, and to commend thee in moste honourable maner, I must come forth with a much purer affection, and may not goe forwarde without the conduction of Gods heauenlie light.

Assuredly hee shall haue no glorie, but shame, that presumeth without all reuerence to approche vnto thy gate.

And he which commeth thereinto must proceede with all reuerence and humilitie, ioyned with good hope, that he may finde grace to be admitted.

Wherefore both humblie, and reuerentlie, and deuoutly, and boldly I go to thee-ward.

Let the godlie louer of thy name listen then what I say,

The heauen reioyceth, the earth wondereth, when by faith mine heart saith; Christ is my saviour.

Sathan flyeth, hell trembleth, when my conscience cryeth, Christ is my Sauior.

The

The fourth booke

The world waxeth vile, and the flesh humble, when a christian doth say, Christ is my Sauiour.

Sorrow departeth, newe comfort approcheth, when my minde pronounceth, Christ is my Sauiour.

Slouthfulnes vanisheth, mine hart through loue fainteth, when zealouslie I can say, Christ is my Sauiour.

Zeale encreaseth, compunction ariseth, hope groweth, comfort waxeth strong, when my soule soundeth, Christ is my Sauiour.

Mine heart is iocund, mine affection becommeth sounde, when in truth I doe say, Christ is my Sauiour.

For such is the force of these words vttered of a faithfull soule, that no man is able to expresse the same in wordes, but still it resteth more hie and excellent, than may bee reached vnto by the wit of man.

Which maketh me once againe most humblie to bowe my knees vnto thee, O blessed Sauiour, and still I say, O Christ my Sauiour.

O most gratious Iesu receiue my prayer, and mee with it, that I may finde some-what that may like thee well, and embolden mee, and kindle my

my zeale, and keepe mee euermore in continuall praising of thine holie name.

Oh that for the satisfying my desire to praise, and to pray vnto thee from the verie bottome of mine hart, both all my members were forthwith conuerted into tongues, and those tongs into fierie voyces, that I might finde a way to glorifie thee, my Sauiour, worlde without ende!

Oh that for all my sins wherwith I haue deserued thine indignation, offended grieuouslie thy father, and dishonored thee with all the hoste of heauen, I might once so throughly bewaile, and repent, that I might hereafter take a newe trade of life to thy glorie, and the comfort of my soule.

Oh that thou wouldest assist mee in well dooing, seeing my life fraile & I all subiect to offending!

Oh pardon and forgiue all my sins, either wilfullie or negligently committed, all my vaine thoughts, my vngodly speeches, my abhominable deedes!

O most gratious Iesu, I say, doe thou both defend mee from dooing anie

The fourth booke

any wickednes hereafter, and forgiue, I pray thee, all my sinnes forepast: so shall I be both the more deuout, the more zelous, and the more carefull in saying, thou Christ art my Sauior both in mine heart, and with my mouth, in companie, and in my chamber, and in the garden, and in the field, and in all places whersoeuer I shall be.

And now, what more shall I aske of thee, O Christ my Sauiour?

What is better, or more profitable, or more necessarie, especially for me a great sinner, than to finde fauour in thy sight, O Christ my Sauiour?

And therefore it is that I haue desired, and still doe craue, euen that by thine intercession and meanes, I may haue the grace of GOD thy Father, who, as both thy selfe hast saide, and the Apostle doth witnes, hast all power giuen thee both in heauen and earth c.

c Mat. 28. 8.

There is no prayer more welcom to thee, than this is, nor anie thing more necessarie for mee, than the grace and fauour of God.

If I haue the grace of God, whatsoeuer else I doe want, I am rich enough

enough.

For what is all my endeuouring if I lacke that? Againe, what can I not doo, if I be assisted and holpen thereby?

I see that manie and diuers are my wicked affections; but yet against all passions the grace of God is a most effectuall medicine; & if once it come, it will mitigate them all.

I do also stand in neede of spirituall wisedome and knowledge: but the grace of God is a most excellent teacher, & instructer of heauenly knowledge, and is able euen suddenly to instruct me in whatsoeuer things are necessary vnto saluation.

For to require more than is necessary, or to desire to vnderstand more than is lawful to be knowen, is against the will of God, whose pleasure is that we should be humbled vnder his hand, and contented with his grace.

Wherefore obtaine this grace for me, ô Christ, which is so noble and precious, that indeede I ought neither to desire or craue any other thing than grace for grace.

The fourth booke

Chap. 24.
A praier for comfort vnto Iesus Christ.

Grace is poured into thy lips [a].

a Ps. 45. 2

Oh my Lord, I beseech thee, at length now vouchsafe to speake vnto me, O Christ.

Open thy mouth in thine owne name, who art full of all spirituall graces [b].

b Iohn. 1. 16

I. I am the fountaine of mercie; full of loue and sweetnes.

I am the Ladder for sinners; the hope and pardon of the guiltie.

I am the comfort of the sorrowful, and the speciall ioy of all saintes.

Come vnto me so manie as loue me, and fill your selues at the breasts of my comfort; because I am good and mercifull to all which crie vnto mee.

Come vnto me both righteous and sinners, I will sue vnto the Father for you; I will intreate him to be good vnto you, and to fill you with the holy Ghost.

I call euerie one, I looke for all, I desire to haue all to come vnto me; I despise no sinner, but with the angels in heauen I reioice exceedingly ouer that sinner which repenteth [c], and so commeth into the fauour of God: for no one drop of my blood which I shed for the worlde, is in vaine. [c] Luk. 15. 10

Therefore come vnto mee, yee sonnes of men, consider and behold my zeale for you vnto God my Father.

Lo, I haue taken his wrath vpon my selfe, I haue borne his displeasure [d], yea, and continuallie doe I make supplication for you vnto him [e], whome you knowe right well you haue greeuously offended. [d] Isa. 53. 1. 2. &c. [e] 1. Ioh. 1. 2

Turne then, and approche, repent, and of my worde you shall haue pardon.

For lo, I stand betweene heauen and earth, betweene God and sinners; and that this world perish not, I obtaine through my prayers.

Wherefore abuse not my goodnes and mercie; but beware of offending, least when you little thinke thereof [f], indignation bee powred vpon you, and intolerable vengeance [g]. [f] Mat. 24. 44 [g] Rom. 2.

I doe forewarne you as children, I beseech you as friends, bee you perfect as your heauenlie Father is perfect [h].

h Mat. 5. 48.

Forget not mee, who haue beene, and am, and will be mindfull of you.

For I doe both pittie such as are in miserie, and I doe entreate for those which crie vnto me [i].

i. Ioh. 2. 1, 2

S. O gratious speech, and full of all comfort!

O heauenlie voice, sweetlie dropping from heauen to the cõforting of sinners, & reioycing of the righteous.

O celestiall musicke, how sweetely doost thou resounde in a desperate conscience!

Whence is it that the Sauiour of mankind will thus talke with me?

Blessed art thou, O Christ, and blessed are the words of thy mouth. For honie is vnder thy tongue, and the sauor of thy speech excelleth all sweetnes.

My soule was mollified, so soone as thou spakest, O Christ.

Behold, no sooner did thy voyce sounde in mine eares, but my soule within did spring for ioy.

For my spirit reuiued within me; and all mine entralles were filled with

with newe comfort; becauſe good & ioyfull things are tolde mee this day by you.

I was dolefull, but now I am iocund becauſe of your wordes. For your voice is ſweete in mine eares.

I was grieued and deſolate; but now I am reuiued. and made merrie. For thou haſt ſent thine hand from on hie, and touched mee, whereby of weake I am become ſtrong.

Scarſe could I ſpeake: but now I haue a good minde to ſing, and to praiſe thee highlie.

I was loth to liue, and now I am willing to die, becauſe I haue thee, Chriſt, for mine aduocate, with the Father, to whoſe mercie I commend my ſelfe, euen from this time for euer and euer.

For ſince firſt you began to ſpeake vnto the heart of the deſolate Orphane, I haue beene changed into a better ſtate, and greatlie comforted in my minde.

I was almoſt at the doore of deſperation, but thy comfort came, & lifted me vp with theſe wordes.

L. What is the matter Son? and who are they which woulde hurt thee? feare not, I will ſee vnto thee my

The fourth booke

sonne.

k Rede, i. 4

I doe liue with God my Father [k], and I sit at his right hand, beeing a faithfull hie Priest, and an intercessor for thy sinnes [l].

l 1. Ioh. 2. 1 2

In me thou shouldest repose thy trust, because I doe both giue life [m], and destroy death [n].

m Ioh. 11. 25

n 1. Gor. 15. 55

I was incarnate of a virgine in time [o], but of my Father begotten before all times [p], and when the fulnes of time came I suffered for mans saluation [q].

o Mat. 1. 18 19 &c.

p Psa 2 7. Heb 1. 5

q Gal. 44. 5

Lo, I am the hope and comfort of the godlie, and by mee is faith and victorie attained [r].

r 1. Cor. 15. 57.

And therefore let neither me, nor these things be out of thy minde, and thou wilt not feare any dartes of Satan.

S. Oh happie houre! O blessed state, that my Lord and Saiuour wil vouchsafe to comfort on this wise my troubled hart!

Oh that I might still heare thy so comfortable wordes! for greatly doe they inflame, and moue mee, and touch mee euen at the verie heart.

O blessed Christ, thou neuer ceasest to send forth the sweete milk of heauen-

heauenlie conſolation!

For by reaſon of the abundance of thy grace, thou canſt not denie fauor to ſuch as craue the ſame at thine hands; yet often thou ſheweſt much mercie euen to the verie ſinner [f].

O Chriſt, thou excelleſt in pittifulnes, in mercie, and in louing!

O Sauiour, to whom none is to be compared, thou art aboue all to bee loued and to be worſhipped.

O Sonne of God, by whom we are alſo the ſonnes of God [t], & of whom wee are called Chriſtians [u], thou art of all good men to be ſerued moſt religiouſlie, and aboue all [x].

O friend of all friends [y], King of heauen & earth [z], Lord of Angels [a], conquerer of diuels [b], draw me after thee, leaſt I fall, and ſo reſt vnder the heauie burden of ſin.

Poure out thy grace, ſend me thy comfortable dewe from aboue, that truely I may perceiue, how thou art the procurer, and the open fountaine of all mercie [c].

L. I am indeed the ſpring of holie loue, and of chaſte and religious fear, of godly conference, and of ſweete conſolation.

Therefore when you doe heare

f Mat. 25, 45

t Gal. 4, 6, 7

u Act. 11, 26
x Mar. 4, 10.
y 1. Ioh. 3, 16
z Reu. 1. 5, 6
a Heb. 1. 6, 7 &c.
Mark. 1. 13
b Mat. 4, 10 11,
Mark. 5. 7, 8 9, &c,
c 1. Pet. 3. 24 25

my name, reioice with your whole heart, and magnifie the goodnes of your God.

In honouring me, you honour the Father, which is God as I am [d]. For I am Iesus the Sonne of God [e], and this name shall I haue while the world endureth [f].

But what is Iesus? euen the Sonne of the liuing God [g]; the Sauiour of the world [h]; the King of heauen and earth [i]; the Lord of Angels [k], the redeemer of the faithfull [l]; & the iudge of quick and dead [m].

And what is Iesus? the hope of the godly; the comfort of the desolate; the peace of the meeke; the riches of the poore; the glorie of the humble; the strength of the weake; the waie of such as wander; the light of such as see not; the staff of such as walk not; the oyle of such as feele not; the stay of the oppressed; the helpe of the troubled; and the singular refuge of all good men [n].

Blesse the Sonne with the Father, and so God will blesse you.

Giue honour also and glorie to the Father, whensoeuer you praise mee.

His glorie is my ioy; & my praise is his worship.

d ioh. 1. 1. 2. &c.
e Mat. 1. 18 20
f 1 Cor. 15 28.
g Mat. 16. 16
h Mat. 1. 21
1. Pet. 1. 18 19
i Reue. 17. 14
Re. 19. 16.
k Dan. 7. 10
Heb. 1. 6. 7 &c.
l Gal. 3. 13
m Act. 10. 42
n Mat, 11. 28

Place

of the Imitation of Christ.

Place me and the Father as a seale vpon thine heart, and as a token vpon thine arme.

Therefore sit you, or stand you, or pray, or reade, or wright, or worke you, let my name Iesus and God be often reuerendly in your mouth, but continually in your heart.

S. O grant it may be so good Iesus; and let all people, tribes and toongs, serue thee, and let all creatures bow at thy presence.

Let heauen say, Raigne thou Iesus; let the earth make answere, yea for euer and euer let him raigne.

Yea let all Saints confesse thy glorious Name, and all good people reioice before the Father, and thee his lambe°, and our Lord Iesus Christ P Amen.

°Ioh. 1. 29
PRo. 13. 7

Chap.

The fourth booke

Chap.25.

That for God his benefits we are *to thanke him.*

BLessed bee the glorious Name of the Lord for euermore [a].

a psa.72.19
b Ioh.20.17

O Lord my God [b], let all my doings, all my reading, all my wrighting, my thoughts, wordes, and vnderstanthing, tend vnto the aduancement of thine honor [c].

c 1.co.10.31

Yea, let me both begin my busines in thy Name, and goe forward in thy feare, and finish it with thy blessing.

That which thou hast giuen, that receiue againe; and from whence the streames doo flowe, thither let them returne.

It neuer goeth better with mee, neither dooth it relish better to my soule, then when vnfainedly I dooe ascribe all to thee, whatsoeuer I haue either doon, or thought as I should.

My desire is to render thankes, which I then doo as I ought, when for that I haue receiued, and thou hast giuen, I ascribe all praise to thee, and

and nothing to my selfe.

For what can I, a wicked and vnprofitable seruant, render vnto thee my God? Alas, all that I can do, yea, if I should doo all which thou commandest to bee doone, it is to none effect [d]. [d] Lu.17.10

So that I am brought vnto nothing, and right'y humbled. And indeede it is very well that I am so brought downe [e], that thou alone maiest bee iustified [f], and haue the praise of all, and that vile dust [g] may at no time glorie in it selfe. [e] ps.119.71 [f] psal.51,4 [g] Eccles.10 verse 9

Howbeit, I mind not to surceasse, but will extoll thee both with heart and mouth For albe I discharge not my dutie therein as I ought: yet ought I to speake of thy goodnes, and not be silent.

O my God, thou art my glorie; my praise shall alwaies be of thee [h]. [h] psa.71.6

He that would but a little consider of thy glorie, and knowe what it is to glorie in the Lord [i]; how would hee despise all outward glorie!

He that would, euen but a little, taste of thy sweetnes; how quicklie would he loath, as most bitter, the pleasure of this world!

He which would receiue euen but

[i] Ier.9,24

a small sparkle of loue into his breast, howe would hee burne in affection! For full gladly would hee contemne all thinges to haue thy friendship: and would count it all sweete and easie to bee borne, whatsoeuer he should do, or suffer for thy loue sake [k].

k Rom. 8. 35

Hee that woulde consider in his minde thy goodnes to man warde; how would hee reioyce, and run after thee! He would seeke nothing so charilie, he would keepe nothing so warilie, he would pursue nothing so egerlie, as to serue thee. For in louing, he would feele no burden [l], because loue would beare all burdens.

l Sal. 5. 8. 6. 7

So then they which complaine of the burden, doo plainely declare how they haue little true loue in them.

To serue of loue, is of all others the greatest pleasure, and comfort in labour.

True loue dooth neither respect commoditie, nor feare domage, but in all things seeketh that which may please thee.

Oh Christ, how sweete is thy loue, how well doth it sound, how sweetlie dooth it enter, how stronglie dooth it binde!

Oh

of the Imitation of Christ.

Oh that it would fast binde me to thy continuall seruice! oh that it would whollie take me, and whollie subdue me, and whollie and altogether make me to be thine!

For then, and not before am I free, when I am taken of thy loue, and vterlie depriued from all that mine is.

O my Lord, I am thy seruant[m], yea thy seruant am I, because thou hast redeemed me[n]. m Ps.143.12 n 1.Co.6.20 1.Cor.7.23 1.Peter.1.19

I am thy seruant with a very good will, and am not ashamed to be properlie thine.

I wish not to be mine owne man againe: and therefore, Lord, helpe mee, that I may be freed from that which naturallie is mine.

Oh blowe and kindle, and inflame the fire of my zeale, so shall mine heart boile, and become pure, cleare, & pleasant: for thy loue expelleth vice, and consumeth sin.

Lay thou fast hold vpon the band of loue, and I shall stand and continue in thy seruice.

Full well I wot, no good can my seruice doo you, Lord; but all the benefit redoundeth to my selfe, if I do that which I know is acceptable in thy sight.

Would

The fourth booke

Would I did, and hid not, that I reuealed, & concealed not thy works, Lord!

When shall I be able worthily to consider the manifold benefits conferred vpon me of God!

Mercifully hast thou dealt with thy thy seruant O Lord; but alack, I neuer thanked thee for the same, as thou deseruedst.

And therefore am I punished, and pinched at the very heart, euen because I am vnable to answere thy benefits so great and so manifold.

Oh that I could euen but once woorthily, and thoroughly thanke thee for all these things!

But what may proceede from him, in whome nothing is? An emptie vessell, can minister no drinke.

What then shal I doo? Something I must giue. For it is not lawfull to come before GOD with an emptie hand. Because the Lorde abhorreth the vngratefull man[o].

[o] Lu. 17. 17

Oh, that I could finde something in this world to giue you, that might be acceptable in your sight!

Oh my Lord, whome in heart I loue, what would you that I should giue you.

As

As for any good thing of mine you neede it not P. And why then exact you a gift of mine hands? For riches, none is comparable to you, and yet require you somewhat of me? P psl. 50. 12

L. That which I demaund is euen your selfe whollie. For so it is expedient, if you would purchase my fauour.

I will giue grace to you, and you shall shewe grace to mee; and so loue shall be continued betweene vs.

Giue me your selfe, and you haue giuen euen all.

S. O good Iesus, the fountain of al goodnes, the fountaine of life, the fountaine of grace, the fountaine of sweetnes, the verie fountaine of aye lasting wisedome, powre vpon mee enen at this instant, I beseech thee, the gift of thy celestiall grace, and teach me to be gratefull, and to giue my selfe before all thinges whollie vnto you; for this is the deerest thing that I can render.

This I doo knowe, and acknowledge. Therefore receiue mee: lo, I am whollie thine, and all that mine is, is thine.

Onelie

Onelie one thing there is which I cannot giue; and that is my sinne, which is mine indeede properlie, and therefore not to be imputed vnto thee.

Sin mine is; and all defaultes within me are to be ascribed to me onely; but glorie, and for all thy benefites thankes be vnto thee.

But now in calling thy benefits into mind, of many I gather only a few, and those which doo most of all moue me, & appeare in my mind. For neither wil the time suffer to recite, neither can my thoughts comprehend them all [q].

q I. Cor. 2. 9

Because for number they are infinite, for greatnes incomprehensible, and inestimable for goodnes. For bought they cannot bee, because they are freelie giuen [r]. And therefore onelie thankes bee required for them, otherwise all shall be taken away, as from that vngratefull one [t].

r Mat. 10. 8 Iames, 1. 17
s Mat. 25. 28
t Mat. 4, 10
u Iohn. 1. 1 2 3 Colos. 1. 15 16 17
x Gen. 1. 27 Psa. 119. 73
y Psalm 8. 6 7. &c.

First therefore and afore all things, I thank thee, ô Lord my God [u], creator of all things [x], for making mee a man, after thine image and similitude [y], and for placing mee ouer the workes of thine hands [z].

This is the great and first benefit bestowed

bestowed vpon mee, and that of thy meere goodnes.

For I made not my selfe, but thine hands did fashion me [z], they brought me into this worlde through my parents [a], whome thy will was, should serue thee herein. z ps. 100. 3 a ps. 139. 13 15, &c.

And lo, I am better than other creatures, exalted aboue the beastes of the field, and birds of the aire [b]; in that I am fashioned after thine image [c], indued with eternall wisedome, and naturally participate of the light vncreate, and of the vnchangeable truth. b Gē. 1. 28 Wisd. 9. 2, c 1. Cor. 11. 7

Wherefore for my beeing, liuing, and vnderstanding, I giue thee euerlasting praise, wishing and desiring herewithall, that all creatures both in heauen and earth, may euerlastinglie commend thy glorious and most excellent name.

I blesse thee, O Father, Lord of heauen and earth [d], who of nothing through thy onely begotten Sonne Iesus Christ in the holie Ghost, hast created all things [e]. d ps. 97. 1 psa. 99. 1 e Ioh. 1. 1. 2. 3. Heb. 1. 2

Yea all things thou hast made, not of necessitie compelled, but of pure and speciall loue moued thereunto, therby to shewe thy power vnto the sons of men,

The fourth booke

f Ps. 145.4 men f; and by thine inuisible and coeternall wisedome with thee, thou

g Wisd. 9.1 hast most perfectlie disposed this visible world g.

h Mat. 28.18 i Gen. 1.28, Let all thy creatures subiect in all things to thee h, and ordeined for the vse of man i, blesse thee.

For at thy commandement both raine falleth from heauen, and fruit springeth from the earth.

The sunne shineth brightly in the day time, the starres giue light by course in the night.

The fountaines spring, the riuers flowe, and fishes of diuerse kinds do swim:

The birds not onely flie, but sing also: and the goates, the colts, and hartes, doe spring vpon the mountaines.

The sheepe and other cattell, doe ioy in good pasture, and diuerse other liuing creatures doe run about the groaues.

The ground waxeth greene, the fields prosper, and trees of the wood doe yeeld both boughes and fruit.

k Ps. 72. 18 O Lord, which onely doost wonderous things k, euen al these are thy workes.

Another benefit which thou hast bestowed

bestowed vpon mee, is the mysterie of incarnation [l], the worke of my redemption, the price of our salvation, euen the fruit of thy passion and death. l 1.Tim.3.16

O greate worke of mercie! Oh worke of most excellent loue [m], most abiect humilitie [n], of most rare patience [o]! m Rom.5.8, n phil.2.5, &c. o 1.Pet.2.21 22.&c.

No man could merit, nor Angell procure this thing.

The Prophets haue wondered at it; the Apostles haue seene & taught it; the faithfull haue embraced it; & the elect speciallie doe loue, & call it into minde.

The due consideration of this benefit stirreth vp good desires; inflameth the heart; nourisheth deuotion; inlighteneth the minde; purgeth the affection; draweth on to heauenward; withdraweth from the world; driueth vnto God; and vniteth the soule with Christ.

This benefit farre excelleth the aboue mentioned: yet there is one which gaue each, and hath bestowed both of them vpon vs, euen our Lord Iesus Christ.

For what the better had I bin for my life, if I had not bin redeemed with

The fourth booke

with the precious bloud of my Saui-
p Gala. 3, 13 our Christ [p]?

Therefore the grace and mercie of
q Psal. 130, 7 God grewe vpon me, and plentious redemption was made [q]: for the corrupted nature of man without the aid of God his maker, could neuer haue beene repaired.

O Father of mercies, and God of
r 2. Cor. 1, 3 all comfort [r], thou to redeeme thy
s Ephes. 2, 3 damned seruant [s], hast giuen thine
t Rom. 8. 32 onely Sonne to the death [t].

O wonderfull kindnes of thine to vs-warde, vnto which, neither the
u 1. Tim. 3, 16 wit of man, nor the vnderstanding of Angels can attaine [u]! But alone, sweete Christ, thou art the beginning and the ende of our saluation, & alone couldest helpe the miserable, & damned, thou alone art prone to the same.

For thou diddest vouchsafe to ap-
peare vnto the world in the likenes of
x Phil. 2. 5. 6 a most vile seruant [x]; and for mor-
y Ecclus. 10. verse 9 tall wormes [y] euen of meere pitie re-
z Gal. 1, 13 ceiuedst with a willing minde the iudgement of a cruell death [z].

O good Iesus, thou which art the
fountaine of mercie, the light of aye
a Wis. 7, 26 lasting glorie, the pure glasse (without spot) of God his maiestie [a], kindle

mine

mine heart with the meditation of this vnspeakeable benefit, bestowed vpon me, and vpon all mankind [b]. b Rom. 5. 15 16. &c.

But this, as was the former, is generall, sufficient to saue all, but not effectuall in all, by reason of the incredulitie, and malice of manie: howbeit it saueth, and is profitable to all the elect, for whose sake all things were created, and be, as I may say, created againe, through thee my Sauiour.

O good Iesus, how manifold are ỹ benefites brought vnto vs by thine humanitie!

Thou becamest our brother, and flesh of our flesh [c], that we might be counted the children of God [d], and haue accesse vnto the Father, thorough thee [e], the fire of whose displeasure none could quench, but thou alone of whome himselfe did say [f]: *This is my beloued Sonne, in whom I am well pleased.* c Iohn. 1. 14 d Gal. 4. 6, 7 e 1. Ioh. 2. 1. 2. f Mat. 3. 17. Mat. 17. 5

Happie is the soule, which earnestlie recordeth, and hartilie loueth, and worthily extolleth the Sacraments of our redemption; and for them thanketh thee; and finallie dependeth vpon thy counsaile, more than vpon her owne sense.

For none is meete to search out, no wise-

wisedome can reach into this mysteries; onely it is the strength of beliefe, and the purenes of the heart lightened from aboue g, that beholdeth the same.

g Mat. 5. 8

Oh, blessed is hee that is worthie to receiue that by grace, which the wise of the worlde could not vnderstand by nature h!

h Mat. 11. 25

O sweete Iesu, the wisedom of the Father, make mee in the light of faith to knowe this great and woonderfull mysterie of thine incarnation i, for therein the sweetnesse of our whole saluation lyeth, and thereby the rarest friendship that euer was seene appeareth k, and through it the vnsearchable fulnesse of thy wisedome glittereth most gloriously.

i 1. Tim. 3. 16

k 1. Io. 3. 16 Rom. 5. 8. Rom. 8. 32

O let thy seruant growe on still in godlines, in the studie of well doing, and more and more in his memorable secret of thine incarnation, make mee acquainted with the mysterie of thine holy passion, and draw mee wholly into the meditation of thy workes!

The declaration of this loue, and humilitie, is a woonderfull deep, and a certaine celestiall sea, which may

not be swoom ouer, wherein do swim too and fro the spirituall fishes both small and great, which thou hast taken within the net of faith.

Wherefore let this thy so great loue and sweetnes, thine so great humilitie and kindnes abide still in my remembrance; let it alwaie remaine in euerie sacrifice of prayer that I am to make; and in all mine holie exercises let there bee somewhat, as pleasant frankincense, and delightfull spices, for a sweete smelling sauor to be offered vnto God the Father, concerning the mysterie of thine incarnation and passion.

Let nowe then such as thou haste redeemed, I say, whome thou hast redeemed out of the hande of the enemie [l], sing out with mee the song of thine heauenlie praise, and of inwarde ioy together with thankesgiuing. l Luke. 1. 74

Yea, let all the Angels standing about thy throne, fall vppon their faces, and worship the Lambe of God, who hath taken away the sins of the world [m], saying [n]: m Ioh. 1. 29. n Reu. 7. 12

Praise, and glorie, and wisedome, and thankes, and honor, and power, and might, bee vnto our Lord Iesus Christ

The fourth booke

Christ for euermore, Amen.

A third benefit not inferior to the former, is the grace of iustification, whereby of thy goodnesse thou hast drawen mee vnto repentance, and amendment of life, forgiuing my sins, and giuing me both hope of pardon, and willingnes to doe well, and to serue thee euermore.

This, after Paule duely had considered, he adhorteth his disciples to bee both thankfull for so great a benefit, and also mindefull of the heauenlie grace, and to studie to showe themselues worthy so spirituall a calling:

1.Cor.1.26 27. *Brethren, saith he, you see your calling, how that not manie wise men after the flesh, not manie mightie, not manie noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the worlde to confound the wise.*

These things I consider in my self, who notwithstanding I am contemptible, and vnmeete for this worlde: yet by thine holie calling am I saued from the shipwrack of the same, vnto thine holy seruice. And this I ascribe wholhe, not vnto any goodnesse of mine, but vnto thy prouidence.

For the which I extoll thy goodnes, and blesse thee, euen I say, for calling

ling mee gratiously, for giuing mee a desire to please thee, for pardoning all my sins; for putting me vnder thy sweete yoake, softening mine hart with the oyle of thy spirit, whome the world neither knoweth, neither seeth nor sauoureth.

O mercifull Iesu keepe me in this minde, I beseech thee, encrease thy gifts of grace within mee more and more, so long as I remaine in this visible light.

I perceiue right well this calling of mine is a great benefit, not giuen to all men, but onely to such as God the Father hath ordained thereunto: because it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth; but in God that sheweth mercie p, that euery mouth may be stopped q, and all the worlde culpable before God; & that no flesh should reioice in thy presence r, nor ascribe any of their owne vertues, or good-works, to themselues.

p Rom. 9. 16
q Rom. 3. 19
r 1. Cor. 1. 29

For if thou shouldest deale with me in iustice, alas, I were the damned with the cursed spirits in hell.

But of thy goodnes, O Lord, thou hast spared mee, and forgiuen my sins, whereby I am not as the childe

of perdition.

And therefore am I bound to render great thankes vnto thee for so excellent a benefite, & would to God, both in my speech, and in my life, all the daies of my life, I might answere my calling!

But Lord, in steede of all thankes, receiue I beseech thee, my poore seruice, whereby I desire, and indeed am bound to serue thee.

Graunt also that the debt of my seruice may proceede from the heart, and finally agree to thy will and honor; and that mine heart bee neuer turned from thy loue, but that both my soule and bodie may alike watch and perseuer day and night in thine holie seruice, euen so long as life is within my bodie, and I haue my wits to remember thee; let thy praise be neuer out of my mouth, nor the remembrance of thy manifolde benefits slip out of mine heart.

And if thy seruant shall yet liue many yeeres, either an hundred, or howe many soeuer, graunt that I maie not prooue luke-warme, or abashed at thy seruice, but bee euer so zelous, and so willing to serue thee as I was at the first heure and day when

of the Imitation of Christ.

when mine heart was admonished & confirmed of thee, euen with a pure and whole minde only to follow thee my Lord.

Neither let any infirmitie or aduersitie hinder my purpose; but euen as now I meane, and purpose in the hearing of thee my God: so I beseech thee giue grace, that what now I haue promised, I may performe.

And although through my infirmitie and faults, this my course shall be broken as there is no man so righteous vpon earth but he sinneth ‡; yet suffer me not to despaire, and to faint vtterly, but put into my minde forthwith to bow the knees of mine heart, and with much sorrowe and teares to offer vnto thee my wofull and wounded conscience to bee healed with the salue of thy mercie, and that my purpose may bee bound more surely than euer it was. ‡ 2. Chron. 6. verse 36

Let mee neuer repent mee of this couenant, but still giue thankes that I haue founde such fauour in thine eies as to bee accepted into thine holie warfare.

Thou canst, O almightie †, and all † Ezr 10.3 2. Cor. 6.18

u wis. 12. 20
2. Cor. 1. 3
x Gen. 1. 26
Psal. 100. 3

mercifull God [u], who haste of nothing created mee [x], and foreseest the fall, and infirmitie of man; thou art able, I say, and that thou wilt I beseech thee, forgiue the sinnes which I haue committed; supplie what I haue omitted; restore what I haue left, heale what is sicke; cleanse what is vncleane; lighten what is darke; asswage that which swelleth; inflame what is quenched; repaire that is broken; recouer that is neglected; amende what is awrie; make plaine what is rugged; restraine what is curious; call home that which wandereth; place what is out of order; yea, and alter the whole state of my minde, that nothing be wanting to my former purpose, and let all occasion of euill, worke for the best vnto mee, I most humblie desire thee.

This chaunge, is made by the right hand of God; this is God his visitation; this is the manifolde conference of the diuine goodnesse.

In steade of all thankes, accept the deuoute seruice of thine holie Church where-so-euer, with the sweete

sweete praises of the whole court of heauen.

And let all the Saintes from the beginning of the world, which thorough thy grace haue bin enlightened and called, yea and all the faithfull and Christian people which either bee in the world, or haue beene afore vs, or shall liue hereafter, let them I say together celebrate and praise thy all sweete and glorious name, which is aboue all names to be blessed y. y Phil. 2. 9. 10.

Let them repeate againe, and againe with great ioy, repeate all praises dulie and deseruedlie to bee saide of thy name, and that so manie times, as there bee either in the heauen, starres; or in the sea, fishes; or in the earth, corners; or in the Bible, letters.

And all this being doone, yet must I say, they haue not praysed thy name sufficiently, the which I desire to commende euen to the vttermost of my strength, and by all meanes to extoll, vntill I attaine vnto those praises, which now cannot be expressed by the voice of mortall men.

So that thou seest now my Soule, the greatnes and the excellencie of God thy creator and redeemer his benefits, the which no creature, nor all creatures may recompence, whom hee hath made vnto the praise and glory of his eternall and blessed
2 Isai. 43.7 name [2], who needeth no glory, but is alone all-sufficient for himselfe; he
Exo. 3.14 that is what hee is [a], is his owne glory.

The number of his benefits was so great, that I could not place them all before mine eies; and therefore of a great many I chose three pretious gifts, euen as the Wisemen did, which were about to offer to
b Mat. 2.11 the Lord [b], wherein I thought good to comprehend the rest.

For euery benefit of God, if you marke well, is either of nature, or of grace, or of superexcellencie: and whatsoeuer else is, maie fullie bee referred vnto one of these three kindes.

In the creation, you haue the benefit of nature: in the Redemption, the benefit of superexcellencie; in our Iustification, note the benefit of grace.

For

of the Imitation of Christ.

For all which, and for euery of them, glorie bee to thee, ô sacred Trinitie, one equall deitie, both before all worldes, nowe and for euermore [c], Amen. [c] Rom. 11. 12

FINIS.

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